ISLAMIC INFLUENCE
ON
INDIAN SOCIETY

By M. Mujeeb

Education and Traditional Values

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INDIAN SOCIETY

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INTRODUCTION

SOME EXPLANATION IS perhaps necessary why this collection of essays and articles bears this particular title. I have, therefore, thought it appropriate to give an Introduction indicating the wide areas in which Muslims, as inhabitants of India, influenced and were influenced by their fellow-countrymen, emphasising at the same time in some of the essays the values which I consider Muslims as followers of Islam should have represented. The expansion of the Muslims, which was only indirectly the expansion of Islam, must be seen in the light of the economic forces which governed the life of Western and Central Asia, and the political aspirations generated by the need and the desire to derive the fullest advantage from a control over economic relationships and opportunities.

Luxurious living in Rome in the age of the Empire stimulated the trade in spices, and the routes followed by this trade, through the Red Sea and along the Arabian and Indian coast became a political prize. After the downfall of Rome and the rise of the Sassanian Empire in Iran, control of this route passed into the hands of the Sassanians, and when, in the middle of the seventh century, the Muslim Arabs overthrew the Sassanians, they took over the trade in spices and other products of South India, Ceylon and countries further east. The city of Basrah in southern Iràq was founded to serve as an *entrepot* for this trade. This route was excellent hunting ground for pirates, and it was primarily to ensure the security of the trade route that the Arabs attacked and conquered Sindh in 711-12. Their settlements and trading centres

along the Malabar and Coromandel coasts were under the protection of the ruling chiefs and kings, because they were a cherished source of benefit and wealth, and no causes of conflict were created.

The relationships built up by Arab trade with the South have to be distinguished from developments in Central Asia. Here the basic fact is the growth of population among nomadic tribes, leading to conflicts among the tribes themselves and the settled populations with which these tribes clashed in their search for land resources. The establishment of the Kushan Empire may be taken as an illustration of the conflicts, migrations and conquests which were a constant feature of Central Asian life. The Kushan Empire also controlled important trade-routes; the Silk Road to China and its tributaries, among the most important of which was the Kabul-Khyber route across Punjab and along the Jamuna and the Ganges up to Pataliputra The Kushan Empire had been preceded by similar but smaller political structures, and was followed by migrations of tribes into India of which we have no precise record. The conquest of northern India by the Turks, beginning with the invasions of Mahmud of Ghazni was a continuation of this historical process, and would have taken place even if the invading Turks had not been converted to Islam. Religion did, however, give it a distinct cultural character.

One of the facts of their religious history generally ignored by Muslims or not emphasised to the degree required by historical truth is that the Arabs looked upon Islam as their exclusive possession. It was with difficulty that Iranian converts to Islam were given a religious status, and that too as clients of Arab families or tribes. Conversion would mean an increase in the number of those who would insist in having a say in political affairs, and militate against Arab monopoly of power and of the right to rule. Had Islam created solidarity and unity of purpose among the Arabs, events would have taken a different course. But Islam failed to transform Arab tribalism into an overriding sentiment of political unity, and the ceaseless conflicts among the Arabs themselves

undermined the efforts to maintain their monopoly of power. The supersession of the Ummayyads by the Abbasids, who were themselves Arabs, shows how the desire for power led to an alliance between Arabs and non-Arabs and enabled the converted Iranians —whose Arabic names should not deceive us—to wrest power, and along with it religious prestige from the Arabs. The decline of Abbasid power in the tenth century brought in the Turks, first as mercenaries, then as possessors of effective authority. About the same time we see the rise of another movement, that of Sufism, which was purely ethical and religious, and whose aim was to take Islam to the masses. By the time the Delhi Sultanate was established in the early thirteenth century, the Chishti, Suhrawardy and Qadiri Orders of the Sufis were in a position to propagate Islam wherever circumstances permitted.

In discussing the influence of Islam on Indian society and culture we have, therefore, to bear in mind four different types of operative forces, the political, the economic, the social and the religious.

From the time of Mahmud of Ghazni's invasions, the political force mainly counteracted those forces which worked for harmony and understanding Al-Beruni has recorded that Mahmud's exploits engendered a deep hatred of the Muslims. Matters did not improve much subsequently. Political authority tends to degenerate into domination through violence to the degree that there is lack of communication between rulers and subjects; in India religion, the caste system, social taboos combined with differences of language and habits of thought to raise barriers between the rulers and the ruled. Muslim rulers consistently exploited religious sentiment to further their own interests, sometimes deliberately and sometimes unconsciously, with the result that growth of fellow-feeling and goodwill was continuously disturbed. As against this we have the tendency of normal human beings to adjust themselves to circumstances which they feel cannot be changed. Certain oppressive features of the caste system, such as the low status assigned to craftsmen, were modified, while the Kshatriyas were displaced as the ruling caste wherever Muslims

established their rule, and the Brahmans as a caste lost the support of political authority. It appears that from the very beginning of Muslim rule certain elements of the urban population, to whom the caste system denied both status and opportunity, were willing to make the best of the new circumstances, and gradually other and more respectable elements joined them. By the middle of the fourteenth century there was a fairly large number of Hindus in government service, and it is a moot question whether they gained or lost by being employed in the revenue and accounts departments rather than the army. They did not possess or exercise political power, but they were indispensable to all governments and their position safeguarded them against those revolutions and intrigues which brought ruin on Muslim officers and their families. By the time of Akbar (1556-1605) even the highest offices could be held by Hindus. But more indicative of the actual position than Akbar's awarding the highest rank among the nobility to Raja Man Singh and appointing Todar Mal as Dewan is his reply to some noblemen who objected to Todar Mal's appointment, asking them why he could not have a Kayastha to manage his revenue affairs when even one of them kept a Kayastha to manage his household.

Perhaps the most significant contribution of the political organisation to culture was Akbar's mansabdari system and its code of conduct. It gave every government officer the right to profess his own religion and to follow all its practices, even though this meant that the Hindu officer could observe the rules of untouchability and other caste restrictions even in his relations with his Muslim superiors. North India owes most of its polish and refinement to the court and the mansabdars, through whom this etiquette was introduced among their own and other well-to-do families, and served as a standard for cultured behaviour.

The economy of this culture derived from two Islamic injunctions to share what one has with relative, friend, stranger and any person in need, and to be grateful to God for all that He has given. The practical expression given to 'obedience' to these

injunctions was a high standard of excellence in food, clothing and material goods and extravagance in gifts. The distinction to which every Muslim who had the means aspired was to be known for his hospitality and his generosity, and the ethical principle underlying the injunctions was overshadowed by the passion for display. The economic effect were in some ways disastrous for the upper classes. Wealth seldom came to stay. There was no accumulation of capital for which the Muslim law of inheritance, which required the distribution of all property, movable and immovable, among the heirs according to a fixed proportion, was also responsible—there was no merit in saving and the tendency grossly to misinterpret the doctrine of dependence on God for the fulfilment of the needs was positively encouraged. But it would be safe to assume that these characteristics of the Muslims did not influence the Hindus, who continued to follow their own traditions.

The Muslim tendency to extravagance was, of course a negation of the ideal of simple living. The vast majority of Muslims were poor and could only live simply. The preacher never tired of relating how destitute the Prophet of Islam was, and how he subsisted on bread and dates because he had nothing better to eat. But asceticism had been positively discouraged, and mortification of the flesh forbidden. However, of the two extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification, both of which are condemned by Islam the latter was regarded as more blameworthy than the former and the refined life with a multiplicity of needs, was definitely preferred to one with a few wants. The production of goods which would satisfy more and more sophisticated needs and tastes became the hall-mark of civilisation, and the result is seen in the impressive variety of utensils, vessels, objects of decoration and use and ornaments in copper, brass, silver and gold. In textile designs and carpets also we observe a rich diversity. There is reason to believe that tailored clothing became common only after the establishment of Turkish Muslim rule in northern India. The philological origin of the names of different objects and materials of clothing and covering would give an interesting insight into the

economic and social developments that took place as a result of introduction of Islam into India.

Muslim civilization was urban, and for Muslims the good life was the life of the city. We shall appreciate the significance of this if we remember that though there were prosperous cities in pre-Muslim India, the tradition that religious instruction should not be imparted in the noise and dust of cities was fairly well established, and that it was considered meritorious for a person to retire into the 'forest' in old age The religious minded among the Hindus have tended to move away from cities. Among Muslims, on the other hand, the mosque is the outstanding symbol of religious life; it is considered meritorious to offer prayers in congregation, and the larger the congregation, the more conscious the community is of its religion. We could say, therefore, that the religious tendency among Hindus has been against urbanisation and among Muslims strongly in favour of it. The number of cities mutiplied considerably during the Muslim period, and their size also increased. In none of the larger and more important cities was the number of Muslims larger than that of the Hindus nor were they economically more prosperous. Urbanisation, therefore, may be regarded as a Muslim contribution to Indian life.

Along with urbanisation came certain inevitable changes. Architecture had to be developed. There are numerous masterpieces of this art as evolved by the Muslims all over the country, and one of the sources of its pride. Students of monumental architecture consider the change introduced by the Muslims as a change from the sculptural to the architectural in conception and from the vertical to the horizontal in construction. We may not be able precisely to trace any gradual transformation of the one into the other, but the Qutub Minar in Delhi is a fine example of a spontaneous blending of the two styles. There were attempts made later in Bengal, Gujarat and Fatehpur Sikri to harmonise the typically Muslim with the typically Hindu in pleasing compositions. The important thing, however, is that monumental and domestic architecture in stone, brick and mortar came to be widely practised

as an art and a technique, and the Hindus and Muslims adapted it to suit their own purposes. A visit to the older parts of any of our inland cities will give an idea of how the new styles of domestic architecture were evolved along with the process of urbanisation, and also of how this domestic architecture represents the typical elements of a common life.

When discussing social change, we must bear in mind the basic fact that the number of Muslims who came from outside India was very small, and of these not all would have come with their families. The vast majority must have been converts. We have accounts of enforced, large scale conversions, as by Sikandar in Kashmir in the early fifteenth century, also of conversions of individuals and families and tribes by rulers out of religious zeal or political policy. But all these accounts do not explain the large number of Indian Muslims in north India as early as the thirteenth century. There must have been other forces and interest at work of which we do not have any certain knowledge. It would not be an unreasonable conjecture to assume that the two most potent forces were the belief in the miraculous powers of Muslim saints and the desire to get on in an environment where Muslims possessed most of political power. What is more to the point, however, is that while the conversion from Hinduism to Islam may have been a matter of moments, the conversion of the converts from the Hindu to the Islamic way of life took centuries, and it was during this process that Hindus and Muslims influenced each other. A study of Muslim customs, specially those relating to marriage and child-birth, would probably show that Hindu customs and ideas had a far greater hold on the Muslims than Islamic doctrine and practice.

The question whether the seclusion of women, also called the pardah system, had a Muslim or non-Muslim origin, has been a subject of rather heated discussion. But there can be no doubt that the practice has a Muslim origin and has been directly and indirectly enforced by Muslims. We know that Turkish women in burqahs rode on horseback; there is a decree of Firoz Tughlaq

requiring women not to go out riding by themselves. Akbar made it one of the Kotwal's duties to see that women did not go out on horseback. Seclusion became usual and more and more strict with time among the upper classes and was adopted as a symbol of respectability by even the lower classes in the towns. Its extent and degree among the Hindus may be taken to have varied in accordance with the number and influence of upper class Muslims in the different regions and towns. On the other hand, Muslim women lost the status given to them by Muslim law because of the permeation of Hindu ideas. The widow, for instance, whose remarriage is as much the responsibility of her guardians as the marriage of virgin daughters, lost her right, and it was restored only gradually as the result of a reform movement in the early nineteenth century. Daughters lost their rights of inheritance, and these have not even now been restored in all regions and classes. The ulama, whose business it is to study and declare the law, have not been able to show that seclusion as practised in India has been enjoined by Islam. They have only been able to defend it as recognised practice.

If the interplay of social forces is taken in its chronological sequence, the development that takes place first after the ousting of the Rajput rulers of the north—the Kshattriya caste—is the liberation of the spoken languages of the north from the domination of Sanskrit and the Brahmans. This is evident in a typical form in Bengal where, till the removal of Hindu rulers, the Brahmans had succeeded in denying recognition to Bengali, the language of the people. The Muslims who established their rule in Bengal had to learn the spoken language to fulfil their political as well as their daily needs; they had no reason to learn Sanskrit. As a result, they patronised Bengali and very soon began a process of translation which made the religious as well as the classical and secular literature in Sanskrit available not only to Muslims with literary taste but also to Bengali Hindus who did not know Sanskrit. Bengal is perhaps an extreme case. But Muslim rule everywhere led to a recognition of the spoken language, which

acquired a status equal in fact if not in theory, to that of Arabic, Persian or Sanskrit as the number of Muslims of Indian origin increased.

A significant question that arises here is whether the people should learn the language of religion or religion should learn the language of the people. It has been mentioned above that from about the tenth century onwards the sufis initiated a movement of taking Islam to the masses. This movement was continued in India. It was concerned not only with the poor, the illiterate or the semi-literate, but all those, apart from the ulama, who were anxious about their fate in this world and the next, who were anxious, in other words, to be good Muslims. The sufis, who were the leaders of this movement, believed it to be their function to give Muslims the guidance that would enable them to become good and true Muslims. Most of the sufis believed in the doctrine of the Unity of Existence, in all existence being a manifestation of God, and this placed all men on the same lever, whatever faith they happened to profess. In their relationships they generally made no distinction between Hindus and Muslims, and anyone who went to their daily assemblies or to any commemoration ceremonies, such as the *urs*, would be impressed by the fact that the religion of the sufi was the religion of the people.

One of the means by which the sufis with a literary bent of mind propagated religiosity were the popular forms of poetry. An outstanding example of this is the *Padmavat* of Malik Muhammad of Jais, which was written in the Avadhi dialect. This served as a model for the *Ramayana* of Goswami Tulsi Das, a book which attained the status of a scripture and may be accounted the most powerful single force which created among the Hindus of north India the sentiment of belonging to one religious community. The unity based on a common reverence for the Vedas was symbolic. The *Ramayana* of Tulsi Das made it real. The endeavour of the sufis to make Muslims into good Muslims is clearly reflected in this parallel endeavour to make Hindus into good Hindus, and this 'influence' is one of the most significant facts of medieval Indian

history, as significant, perhaps, as the appearance among Hindus of many sects in whose beliefs we find doctrines obviously taken over from Islam. These represent a direct influence which, on the whole, served rather to reinforce than to weaken the fissiparous tendencies in Indian society.

Indian music and folk songs have always fascinated the Muslims. Amir Khusrau (d. 1325) has become the legendary unifier of Iranian, Turkish and Indian music, which was studied both as an art and a science. The *Khayal* is regarded as a unique Muslim contribution to Indian music but for the historian the most important fact is that the Muslims helped to secularise Indian music. In north India its association with worship fell into the background, and it became a secular, urban art cultivated solely with the aim of achieving the highest aesthetic values.

From the point of view of Muslim religious law, dancing was a most reprehensible frivolity. But the art of dancing was also cultivated under the patronage of Muslim courts and also by Muslims. The contribution of Muslims to this art is the Kathak style. This, again, though its subjects like the adventures of Krishna and the Gopis are part of religious tradition, is secular in spirit.

In the history of painting in India, the Mughal School is a chapter by itself. It begins with the work of two artists whom Humayun brought from Iran in 1555, and attained its zenith in the time of Jahangir. It exercised considerable influence on the Rajput, the Kangra and other schools of painting.

The question of the Muslim contribution to the Indian way of life raises very large and very absorbing problems, and many aspects of it have not yet received the attention and the study they deserve. It is only after an adequate number of detailed local studies have been made that we shall be able to arrive at valid and generally applicable conclusions. This collection of essays and articles gives a rough indication of the areas that could be studied.

M. MUJEEB

CONTENTS

THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA

DISCOVERY IS A fact, it is also a feeling. There is a rich opportunity for any Indian who travels round the country to see what he has not seen before and to immerse himself in the feeling, approaching ecstasy, of becoming a new and a larger person Our culture has prescribed travel. The Buddhist visited holy places, the Hindu performs the pilgrimage to Amarnath, Rameshwaram, Dwarka and Puri, to Badrinath and, of course, to Banaras; the Muslims pay homage to piety at the tombs of saints, far and near. Now it is almost an obligation imposed by loyalty to the state for the Indian citizen to travel around the country and strengthen the sentiment that binds him to it. It is not enough for him to live in the country, for living can all too easily become a vegetative process. He must discover it, and make his discoveries a vital aspect of his life.

The plains constitute such a large part of the country that those who pass through them, and even more those who live in them are disposed to regard the Indian landscape generally as flat and monotonous, and, to think of the hills as providing the only variety Those who are frequent visitors to the hills think more of the cool climate and the comfortable living. But anyone who wishes to discover India must remember that he has, at the same time, to discover himself, to seek for harmony between nature and his own moods, to understand the language of dawn and sunset, of trees and the breezes that live in them, of flowers and butterflies and birds 'The morning of Banaras, the evening of Oudh, the night of Malwa' have for centuries been regarded as symbols of beauty, as moments when man feels at one with nature These

symbols can be multiplied by anyone filled with the urge for discovery till they become a part of his being. The Emperor Jahangir was among those continuously desirous of communion with nature. Many of the spots he noted as remarkable were developed into gardens during his own time or later. We also, if we are sensitive and observant, can find such spots along our many roads, and transform them into landmarks of aesthetic adventure.

The character of civilisation and culture in various parts of our country is as diverse as the natural landscape. We incline too easily to talk of an inner unity, which means, unfortunately, that we avoid the intellectual and spiritual effort necessary to understand, appreciate and enjoy the diversity. No two styles of building could be more different than the temple and the mosque, and there is no easily accessible inner unity that can relieve us of the cultural responsibility of delving deep into the mystery of how both can be houses of worship To associate the temple with Hindustan and the mosque with Islam may be factually correct, but it does not make the understanding of temple and mosque architecture automatic for the Hindu and the Muslim House architecture has lost its character because of the growth of large cities and the change of habits in the urban population, but many towns still have an individuality of their own which will not escape the observant eye

If any programme of the discovery of India is to be made one should begin with the nearest groves of trees There may be nothing to see there, but they would be ideal places for the first lessons in aesthetic appreciation, in getting the feel of the Indian atmosphere The nearest stream, with the inevitable dry ravines, reminders of the process of corrosion that is continuously taking place, could come next, with circuitous rambles along the water-channels and boundaries of corn fields Sight-seeing, when it begins, can be much more meaningful after the preliminary local excursions in the discovery of oneself, of nature and the creations of culture.

Let us begin with these last, because they are visual repre-

sentations of long processes of the search for knowledge and harmony, for the realisation of the eternal in what is itself physical and transient. The cave, the free standing *stupa*, the temple and the mosque symbolise attitudes and modes of worship, the mausoleum is man's response to the challenge of death and time, the garden is a call for communion with nature. These are parts of our heritage where the self of India is reflected. To see the typical examples of these we must traverse the whole country and visit its modern towns as well.

The geological structure of the Deccan plateau, with its immense rocks, provided the best opportunities for cave architecture. There are caves at Nasik, Bhaja, Bedsa, Karle, Ajanta, Ellora and other places, and all have their individual qualities as works of art. The common features are the degree of faith necessary to undertake such a task and the exactitude of what must have been calculations in a void. The larger caves must have taken decades to hew out of the solid rock, the Kailash temple at Ellora was chiselled out of a rock by four generations of craftsmen. There is no evidence of any afterthoughts, any change of design. And though they were meant for monks, who were supposed to have given up the world, the caves do not convey the impression of isolation from the life around On the contrary, representations of the world are generally there, in some very striking form In the Chaitya cave at Karle there are parallel columns of pillars surmounted by human figures symbolising the glory and the sensuousness of the physical world. In Ajanta, of course, the canvas is larger, comprehending all the variety and the rich colours of life. The gateways of the Sanchi *stupa* present almost every type of activity and are about the fullest record of the various aspects of social and economic life of India in the second century A.D.

Cave sculpture was gradually replaced by architecture in the north and the south, but certain traditions were continued. Sculpture remained dominant, determining the character and outline of even the largest structures. The Konarak temple in

Orissa, the Hoysalesvara temple in Halebid and the Dilwara temple in Mount Abu represent the finest and most elaborate combinations of sculpture and architecture. The multiplicity of forms and ornamental motifs is staggering The calculations were astonishingly exact. Sculptors and stonemasons worked on the ground, and every sculptured piece was fitted into the place where it belonged. The *silpa shastras* were never wrong in the proportions they prescribed, and the sculptors and stonemasons, repeating their formulas as they worked, never made a mistake. The planning was as marvellous as the beauty of the finished detail.

We shall never, perhaps, be able to reproduce fully the spiritual experience that went to the making of the temple We admire the architectural conception, the art, the inwardness. The temple possessed all these aesthetic and spiritual qualities, but it was also something more. It was a fusion of the physical, the sensuous, the transient and the eternal, a spiritual unity that was greater than the sum of its constituent elements. The Temple of the Sun at Konarak, so ambitious in design that it could not be completed, is perhaps the greatest challenge to our understanding. It represents the twelve-wheeled chariot of the sun, drawn by seven horses, and is a mysterious blending of the sacred and the profane, of allegory with gross physical fact, of the profusion of creation on the exterior and absolute silence and formlessness within The great temples of Madurai and Tanjore, apart from the religious significance which they possess, also present a new concept of the vastness of the country, teeming with life and cultural activity Their lofty *gopurams* overshadow the shrine, their tanks and courtyards were planned for multitudes of worshippers Without any change in the ritual or the social system, religion seemed to have become the religion of the people, and to comprehend their limitless preoccupations, hopes and aspirations. Their significance is supplemented, in a way, by the Qutab Minar and the Buland Darwaza of Fatehpur Sikri, which are political in character and embody the determination to achieve power and glory by

fusing all the diverse elements of the country into one body politic.

The Muslims insisted on maintaining their identity as a community. There is much to be said for and against this attitude. But what is important is to remember that the problem still exists for all of us as individuals and also as members of communities. Do we contribute more by being like the rest, by merging our personalities in a large or small social or religious group, or by asserting our individuality and beginning a series of reactions by giving expression to what is unique in us? The Muslims did not isolate themselves. They created new forms in music, in literature, in the minor arts, in architecture, in social life, and much of their contribution was due to their self-assertion in matters of belief as well as taste.

Muslims can pray on any piece of land that is clean and level, and where they do not commit trespass by praying. Mosque architecture is, therefore, entirely incidental and has nothing to do with the requirements of the faith. The construction of mosques became necessary because of the varying climatic conditions and because social and political symbols are indispensable, and the practice, once begun, was continued. But idolatry was forbidden, and the prohibition was enforced with a rigid fanaticism by public opinion. The mosque could have naturalistic ornament, but no human, animal or allegorical figures. The architect was, therefore, thrown back on forms of beauty that arose out of symmetry and proportion, and the combination of arches, domes and minarets. But the variety achieved even under these restrictions is quite astonishing. The Jame Masjid of Gulbarga is all a covered area, with a multitude of domes; the Jame Masjid of Delhi has a covered area of 200 by 90 feet and an open courtyard of over 250 feet side. In the Jame Masjid of Fatehpur Sikri an attempt has been made to combine pillars, reminiscent of temples, with arches and vaulted roofs, and the Jame Masjid of Ahmadabad indicates the intention to endow the mosque with the inwardness of the temple.

The Muslims bury their dead, but the grave should, according to the rule, be a small mound of earth that will disappear within two or three years. However, the religious injunctions in this respect were disregarded by all except the poor, and kings and powerful noblemen erected mausoleums for themselves in order to keep their name and prestige alive. But the mausoleum had to possess some meaning, to indicate in some way the attitude towards life and death, and to give this attitude an individual quality. The Mausoleum of Iltutmish, near the Qutub mosque, is a small structure, and its interior surface is covered with inscriptions in many styles, as if cultural and spiritual values had been the monarch's chief concern. Tughlaq's tomb is by contrast the quintessence of self-assertion, the mailed fist of a warrior who had not known weariness or fear Sher Shah built a mausoleum for himself at Sassaram in an artificial lake, expressive of all the power of his personality, his imagination and his vast ambitions. The Taj Mahal, though it has an Indian ancestry and could have been conceived and built only in India, has attained the height at which the spiritual and the physical meet, at which all the arts, all aesthetic standards, all tastes, all longings for beauty and immortality merge and take a precise form. Here architecture has achieved the highest. Beyond it there is only the 'garden of mystery.'

This 'garden' is a spiritual hypothesis, but it has also been associated with the physical world. It has been the forest where the scriptures were studied, where self-discipline was practised, where illumination was attained. It has been the meadows and groves and streams where people went to purge their minds of the dross of town life. Later it was formalised. It became a pattern of water-channels, terraces, flower-beds and fruit-trees. It was enclosed, but it also gave a perspective on the surrounding landscape. Because of the pre-requisites, of which the most important was the availability of water, it could not be just something around the corner The location of the formal garden was the result of patient search, the reward of courage, imagination, planning and

successful execution. The sun sets everywhere, on mountains, plains, lakes and seas. Everywhere during some season or in particular climatic conditions the play of colour assumes magnificent and mysterious qualities, but the sunset as seen from the Chashma-i-Shahi in Srinagar is a profoundly moving experience. However, it was not the Chashma-i-Shahi Jahangir thought of as he lay dying. He thought of Verinag where, as the night approaches, the spirit can lean back for all eternity on a cool and friendly hillside.

There is no end to what we can discover of India once we have prepared ourselves for the adventure. We shall not all discover the same things or respond in the same way to the challenge to our understanding. But India will be all the richer for every sincere attempt made to discover her secrets and to become intellectually and spiritually aware of what she represents.

ISLAMIC INFLUENCE ON INDIAN SOCIETY

I BELIEVE THERE would be much less misunderstanding among the representatives of the different cultures of the world if we examined more closely the nature of what we call influence. Influence is not imposition, or a free gift of ideas and goods to those supposed to need them, or a borrowing and lending or imitation of the ways of one people by another. It is something really indefinable and can take the most devious ways. We look for it in obvious and concrete forms, in architecture, music, painting, literature, where it is least genuine and seldom enduring, and we generally come to the wrong conclusions For instance, would it be accounted an influence of Islam, which is rightly taken to be a democratic religion, that the caste system should become more deeply rooted than ever before among the Hindus ? But that is what did happen. The Muslim sufis in Iran and Khurasan initiated in the 10th century a movement of taking Islam from the classes to the masses. Muslim sufis in India continued this movement. Goswami Tulsi Das, through his *Ramayana*, made the veneration of Rama the religion of the masses in north India, and as an indirect consequence strengthened the faith of the masses in the caste system as an unalterable, divine dispensation Would this be considered an influence of Islam ? We would say yes, if we regarded the idea of taking religion to the masses as the essential element, and say no, very emphatically, if we valued the democratic tendencies of Islam. Or again, take the case of the poet saint Kabir. He attacked both Muslims and

Hindus for making religion exclusive. We cannot be sure whether he himself was a Muslim or a Hindu; to what influence, then, can we trace his determination to attack and ridicule exclusiveness? Islam, as a missionary faith, enjoins the eradication of false belief, and I would say that Kabir's attitude is an instance of Islamic influence. But, then, Kabir accused the Muslims of holding false beliefs, although they professed Islam. A third instance is even more illuminating. I have often heard it said that in north India Muslims have been the most outstanding masters of vocal and instrumental music. But music is, according to Muslim religious law, one of the frivolities, and for this reason, addiction to it has been condemned. The only explanation I have been able to think of is that the Muslim who took up music would have been one of the damned, both in this world and the next, unless he achieved the highest excellence. That would give him a status in this world, and he would have the confidence to expect forgiveness in the next. But would we call this the influence of Islam?

So let us not try to simplify matters where the reality is complex and, for that reason, all the more fascinating. Let us assume —what was most probably also true—that the Muslims wanted to keep Islam and the Muslim way of life to themselves, and that the Hindus had no desire whatever to be influenced by the Muslims. Then let us see what changes took place

One I have already mentioned. Religion became the religion of the people. Then, the spoken languages of the people became literary languages. We have the beginnings of Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi and Sindhi literature. Further, the city became the centre of culture, tailored clothing came into general use, simplicity was discarded in favour of a life enriched and complicated by a vast increase in the articles of daily use, manners became elaborate and were, so to say, codified in the form of a recognised etiquette. None of these changes, except perhaps the first, can be regarded as due to the influence of Islam, but the changes would not have taken place when they did if Islam had

not become one of the religions of India.

Spoken languages benefited because Muslim rulers, while not exclusive in their patronage, had no reverence for Sanskrit and no reason to venerate the Brahmans, who were generally the only people who learnt and could speak it. On the other hand, the Muslim sufis wished to propagate their ideas, and they could do this only in the language of the people They were not interested in the Hindus but in the Muslims of the lower classes. The Muslims thus made a wide breach in the ramparts behind which the linguistic prestige of Sanskrit—and also, let us remember of Arabic and to some extent Persian—was entrenched. As early as the first decades of the 15th century, a Muslim sufi was asked why he was so favourable to Hindi. And about a hundred years earlier people had seen that when Persian verses failed to produce a mood of exaltation in Shaikh Nizamuddin of Delhi, the singers took up some Hindi folk song, and the Shaikh was soon in rapture.

Islam is averse to luxury of any kind, and the life of the good Muslim should perhaps be more simple and austere than that of the Hindu. But the cultural expression of Islam has been the exact opposite, and Islam has almost everywhere promoted urban life and luxury. This was, perhaps, inevitable when religion required the congregation of the faithful in the mosque preferably five times a day but at least once in a week Muslims have to live together, a mosque has to be the central feature of every Muslim settlement In India, specially during the first two or three centuries, the Muslims could maintain themselves as a community only in the cities Their ruling classes had to strike the imagination of the people. And so we have both a multiplication and a rapid development of cities, and of the galmorous products of craft and industry From this flow the other changes —the demand for many and excellent products of all kinds, even to the extent of having a pair of slippers costing Rs. 50,000/-, the cultivation of elaborate manners, and so on.

I have already indicated how the evolution of an elaborate

and extravagant city life can be traced back to some features of Islam Hinduism is not congregational. There were large cities in the Mauryan and Gupta periods : there have, indeed, to be cities, if there is to be any civilisation. But the Hindu ideal—and my own, if it comes to that—is life away from the city, away from noise and dust and worldliness, where one can live in peace and think. I remember reading somewhere that the Vedas should not be studied and recited in cities. There is, therefore, according to Hindu standards, worldly advantage but no religious merit in city life.

And now I come to the intriguing question of the use of tailored clothing. There is a Sanskrit word for tailor, but I have not found evidence of tailors having been generally busy at any time previous to the settlement of the Muslims. Men and women draped cloth around themselves, or tied it where just draping could not be depended upon The tailor may have existed, but he could be dispensed with The Muslim, on the other hand, cannot say his five daily prayers without the help of the tailor and his craft, and the Muslim woman would lose all rights and status if the tailor did not enable her to clothe herself completely up to the wrists, the neck and the ankles. Rulers set the standard of respectability, and non-Muslim women had to pay the price of respectability by employing tailors and wearing a minimum of tailored clothing.

Finally, though it is not my business to discuss the influence of Hinduism on the Muslims, I must say that if I were an eighteenth or early nineteenth century Muslim, I could easily have become that public nuisance called a reformer I could have said, 'Islam is buried deep beneath Hindu influences ; let us dig it out, clean it and see what it really looks like !'

FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION
THE ISLAMIC VIEW

FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION have legal implications for those who wish to avoid the embarrassment of thinking for themselves. It is enough for them to know what they must and what they must not do, and freedom consists in doing what the law permits. But even those who follow it without question believe the law has a spiritual basis, and expatiate on its underlying 'wisdom' If we probe deeper, we discover that this 'wisdom' is in fact a way out of a controversy which agitated the minds of thoughtful Muslims for many generations, a controversy arising out of the question whether, in his acts of obedience or disobedience, man was really a free agent or, considering God's omnipotence and omniscience, *could* be a free agent when everything happened or was done by God's will alone. An attempt to answer this question, without placing limitations of any kind on the operation of God's will and without admitting the validity of any argument exonerating man from responsibility for his acts, led to considerable verbal quibbling

There are four statements of Muslim authorities, embodied in a kind of catechism, which might be regarded as representing the orthodox or, to be more exact, the majority view on the question of free will and predestination, upon an answer to which the determination of the extent to which man is really free, depends. The first is found in the *Wasiya* or testament attributed to Abu Hanifa (d. 767), the founder of the Hanafi school of jurisprudence :

> 'We confess that works are of three kinds, viz., obligatory, meritorious, sinful. The obligatory are by Allah's command

and in accordance with His will, His linking, His g(
pleasure, His decreeing, His predetermining, His creat
His judgement, His knowledge, His help and His writing
the Preserved Tablet.[1] The meritorious are not by All
command—exalted be He—but are in accordance with
will, His linking, His good-pleasure, His decreeing, His
determining, His writing on the Preserved Tablet. The si
are not by Allah's command but are in accordance with
will, not in accordance with His liking but by His will,
in accordance with his liking but by His decreeing and
predetermining, by His creation but not by His help
accordance with His abandoning and His knowledge, but
with His recognition, and in accordance with His writin;
the Preserved Tablet'

The second statement is from the credo of al-Ash'ari (d. '
evolved as a result of controversy with the philosophical school

'Nothing exists upon earth, be it good or bad, but
which God wills , but all things are by God's will (*mash*
No one is able to do anything before God does it, neith(
anyone independent of God, nor can he withdraw hin
from God's knowledge. There is no Creator but God.
works (*a'mal*) of creatures are created and predestinec
God, as He said (Qur. 37, 94) : "and God has created
and what ye do." Man is able to create nothing; but they
created, as He has said, (Qur. 35, 31) "Is there any Cre
except God ?" '

The third statement is that of Imam Ghazali (d. 1111):

'We witness that He is Willer of the things that ar
Director of the things that happen , there does not come al
in the world, seen or unseen, little or much, small or g
good or evil, advantage or disadvantage, faith or unb(
knowledge or ignorance, success or loss, increase or dim
tion, obedience or rebellion, except by His will. What
wills is, and what He wills not is not. Not a glance of
who looks, or a slip of one who thinks, is outside of His v
He is the Creator, the Bringer-back, the Doer of that which
wills. There is no opponent of His command and no rep(

of his destiny and no refuge for a creature for disobeying Him, except by His help and His mercy, and no strength to a creature to obey Him except by His will. Even though mankind and the Jinn and the Angels and the Shaitaans were to unite to remove a single grain in the world or to bring it to rest without His will, they would be too weak for that His will subsists in His essence as one of His qualities; He has not ceased to be described through it as a Willer, in His infinity, of the existence of things at their appointed times which He has decreed So they come into existence at their appointed times even as He has willed in His infinity without precedence or sequence. They happen according to the agreement of His knowledge and His will, without exchange or change in planning of things, nor with arranging of thoughts or awaiting of time, and therefore one thing does not distract Him from another.'

The fourth statement is in the '*Aqaid* of al-Nasafi :

'And God Most High is the Creator of all actions of His creature, whether of unbelief or belief, of obedience or of rebellion, all of them are by the will of God and His sentence and His conclusion and His decreeing '

'And to His creatures belong actions of choice (*ikhtiyar*), for which they are rewarded or punished, and the good in these is by the good pleasure of God (*rida*) and the vile in them is not by His good pleasure '

'And the ability to do the action (*istit'aa*) goes along with the action and is the essence of the power (*qudra*) by which the action takes place, and this word "ability" means the soundness of the causes and instruments, of limbs. And the validity of the imposition of task (*taklif*) is based upon this ability, and the creature has not a task imposed upon him that is not in his power.'[3]

Sectarian views on this question, in particular the Shi'a creeds, are different But it is clear in every case that there is difficulty in reconciling logically God's omnipotence with man's freedom of action, and God's justice with the punishment of evil-doers who could not have done what they did, and unbelievers who would

not have rejected the true faith except by the will of God. It is not Muslims alone who have had to face this difficulty. It has existed and still exists for all who are aware of the subjection of individual human beings to forces outside their control. Their faults and offences raise the question as to how far they can be justly held responsible for their actions. Here we are concerned only with Islamic doctrines, but these, too, must be seen in the light of a common problem of all right-minded and thoughtful men.

The Qur'an is the basic document of Islam, and no statement about the faith can be valid unless supported by the authority of the Qur'an. The result, as seen in Muslim history, has been that the Qur'an has been quoted in support of the most diverse views. One of the earliest differences was on the question of free will and predestination, the Qadaris emphasizing man's power (*qadar*) to choose without qualifying God's omnipotence and the Jabris[3] holding man responsible for his actions while asserting that everything happens by the will of God. The Qad'ri point of view was developed by the Mu'tazila thinkers and the Shi'as, the Jabri standpoint had the wide support of those who firmly believed in God's omnipotence and did not wish to indulge in what they felt was unnecessary argument, and one that could lead to the weakening of their faith But the reconciliation of free-will with predestination was not an isolated problem Other issues, not strictly relevant, got involved Most important was the question of the rightful ruler, a successor to the Prophet in political authority and, therefore, responsible for the maintenance of the true faith. This was not a matter for academic discussion The rulers were naturally interested in maintaining their power, and those opposed to them in discovering reasons which made opposition to the rulers obligatory on religious grounds. Some verse or verses of the Qur'an were the starting-point and mainstay of all argument.

Islam was preached in the seventh century to a people with unpredictable potentialities. The situation was dynamic from the beginning, and change and development are evident in the Qur'an

itself. However, only someone with personal experience of the spiritual occurrence which has been called revelation and with a complete knowledge of the relevant facts could claim the competence to understand the actual relationship between the series of revelations which comprise the Qur'an and their historical and circumstantial contexts. The Prophet's aim was to preach the faith and not to construct a philosophical system, and those who later on had to discover a system of thought in the Qur'an, were forced to convert the living word into logical propositions Their difficulties were enhanced by the changes in the connotation of words. The Arabic of the pre-Islamic period, the Arabic of the Qur'an and the Arabic of non-Arab scholars of Islamic theology is substantially the same language, but anyone who, like Professor Izutsu, dives deep into the meaning of concepts, discovers shades and even varieties of meaning which baffle an average mind. And the possibility of a precise answer to the question as to which is true—the meaning which emerges from a philological discussion or the one that has been accepted for centuries—is as remote as ever

The literary form of the Qur'an is generally that of a dialogue. The language is rhetorical and powerful, and there is considerable repetition for the sake of emphasis. Sometimes the revelation seems to be obviously related to a particular fact or situation and, therefore, different in type or character from that which has a general application The Qur'an itself has made a distinction between what is clear and direct (*muhkam*) and what is ambiguous and not clear (*mutashabih*). The question has also arisen as to whether some revelations have not been abrogated by subsequent revelations bearing on the same matter. The Qur'an is not a systematic treatise, it is not a theological compendium There was much that required explanation and exposition; there were blanks to be filled in For this purpose, the sayings of the Prophet had to be collected and studied, and criteria of criticism and evaluation to be evolved. This was done continuously for generations, and the result was a mass of what are called Traditions, which were

regarded as supplementing the teachings of the Qur'an. These Traditions reflect changing needs and circumstances, and might contain ideas not found in the same form in the Qur'an. Those who interpreted the Qur'an and the Traditions were affected by the tensions within the Muslim community and by political and cultural tendencies. Defenders of the established order would have one approach, its opponents another. Christian, Hellenistic and Greek thought also influenced Muslim minds. If we regard Islam as inclusive of all Muslim thought, all ideas or beliefs, however contradictory, they will form part of it. But they all base themselves on the authority of the Qur'an, and it is only by a study of the relevant statements of the Qur'an that we can estimate the relationship of these ideas and beliefs with the original source.

The teachings of Islam in regard to free will and predestination are governed by the concept of God This is not defined or defined clearly enough in the Qur'an, and must be regarded as the sum total of His attributes. These, according to tradition, are expressed in the 'Most Beautiful Names', a term that has been used but not explained in the Qur'an They are traditionally believed to be ninety-nine, but according to other calculations, they are five hundred to a thousand. In a recent study[1], it has been shown that these names have had a devotional purpose, and are not an enumeration of God's attributes What the Qur'an stresses is God's omnipotence and omniscience, His knowledge, will, decrees or commands, His measuring and apportioning (*qadar* or *taqdir*), which control everything It is from the manner in which, according to the Qur'an, God exercises his power that we can deduce the extent and nature of man's freedom of action.

The first point to note is that the Qur'an denounces a predestinarian interpretation of God's absolute power as an argument for not accepting His guidance.

> 'Those who associate others with Allah will say, 'Had (Allah) willed it, we would not have associated others with Allah, nor would have our fathers, nor would we have had any taboos.' So did their ancestors argue falsely, till they tasted of our

> strictness. Say to them, 'Have you any knowledge? If so, bring it forth to us. You only follow your fancy; you only tell lies.'
>
> Say to them, 'Allah's is the convincing proof, and if he had wished, He would have guided (*i. e.* He had the power to guide) your will.' (6:149-50)
>
> When they are told, 'Fear that which is before you and that which is after you,[5] perhaps you may receive Mercy, (they turn back)'
>
> And so you cannot bring them a sign from the signs of your Lord from which they will not turn away.
>
> And when they are told, 'Spend out of that with which Allah has provided you,' the unbelievers say to the believers, 'Shall we feed him whom Allah would have fed, had He so willed? You are certainly in manifest error.' (36 45-47)

But if God has absolute knowledge and power, is not man helpless? The rhetorical style of the Qur'an very often leads one to think that God knows everything, and can do and does what He likes, but there are also obvious indications that God's absolute knowledge and power is asserted against those who are reluctant to believe, indifferent or defiant According to Dr. Rahbar, there is no evidence in the Qur'an that God's knowledge predetermines human conduct, and the following verse (5:95) should be taken to represent the actual situation in the light of the statements of the Qur'an:

> 'O believers! God will try you .. that *He may know* who fears him in secret.'

There are eight other passages of a similar import, and at least five others containing phrases like 'God does not yet know the patient,' or 'God will eventually know the truthful.' For example.

> 'Do men then reckon that they will be left to themselves when the say, "We believe", and not be tried?
>
> We did try those who were before them, and Allah will surely know who are truthful, and he will surely know the liars.' (29 1-2)

The conclusion to be drawn from the verses asserting God's knowledge, and His seeing and hearing everything is, according to Dr Rahbar, that God is to be known as a vigilant, well-informed and wise sovereign.[6]

How does God's will (*mashiya*), His absolute power operate ? The following typical passages, apparently indicating that believers and non-believers are what they are by God's will also indicate when the will is exercised .

> 'It is for Allah to show the path ; from it some turn aside , Had He willed, He would have guided you one and all'—(16 9)
>
> 'For each one of you we have made a law and a pathway. And had Allah willed it, He would surely have made you one people, but He shall try you through that which he has given you [7] Be, therefore, emulous in good deeds. To Allah is your return in any case, and He will let you know concerning that wherein you disagree." (5 · 52-53).
>
> 'He leads astray many and guides many, but He leads astray only the evil-doers " (2 : 24)
>
> "Nor will Allah lead a people astray after He has guided them until that is made manifest to them which they have to fear.' (9 · 116)

Although it is stated in many verses that God's will governs man's beliefs and actions, a large number of verses also show that God's will is not arbitrary, but works in guiding men's dispositions in accordance with their willingness to be guided and only those are led into error who stubbornly defy His ordinances.

> 'If you are ungrateful, behold, Allah has no need of you , and He finds no pleasure in the unbelief of his servants , but if you are grateful, He is pleased with you No bearer of burdens shall bear the burden of another. To your Lord is your return, and He will inform you in regard to what you have done ' (39 : 9)

Though God judges, and judges strictly, His concern is not to sit in judgement only. A study of the uses of the word

qaddara, from which *taqdir* is derived, shows that it means that God has created everything according to a measure.[8] In his *Tarjuman al-Qur'an*, Maulana Azad argues that the meaning of *Taqdir* is that the providence of God, the Father (*rabb*), embraces everything. His power is exercised to enable growth and fulfilment in accordance with His will and purpose, and Islam or Faith (*din*) is an enterprise in righteous, purposeful living in which man must participate[9] Destiny, in the sense of an absolute determination beforehand of all that is to happen or to be done, is not the meaning of the term *taqdir* as used in the Qur'an, and no statement in the Qur'an can be quoted to prove that all human action is by arbitrary decree of God.

There is reference in several passages of the Qur'an to a 'Perspicuous Book' or a 'Preserved Tablet', as for instance:

> 'No misfortune befalls the earth or yourselves, but it was in the Book before we let it befall.' (57 22)
>
> 'There is no beast that walks upon the earth but its provision is made, and He knows its settlement and resting place. All is in a Perspicuous Book.' (11 : 8)

The first verse implies that there is order in the universe. But as to everything being in a Book, there are two obvious questions, (a) how long is misfortune written down in advance, and (b) is it written down arbitrarily or with a righteous purpose ? If we make allowance for the rhetoric, the verse means no more than that misfortunes and accidents are in God's control It would be stretching the implication too far to make it mean that human actions or what happens to human beings is written down ineffaceably in a book. This idea has been introduced through Traditions whose validity is open to doubt. But the idea of a Book suggests the need of a macrocosmic view This we shall discuss later

As already stated, the Qur'an itself makes a distinction between those of its statements and commands that are clear and of established meaning (*muhkam*) and those that are not clear or ambiguous

> 'He it is who has revealed the Book, of which there are some verses that are *muhkamat* ; they are the mother of the Book ; and others are *mutashabihat* ; but as for those in whose hearts is inclination to error, they follow what is *mutashabih* in the Book, and do crave for sedition, seeking their own interpretation of it , [but none knows the interpretations of it] save Allah. And those firm in knowledge say, 'We believe in it , it is all from our Lord.' But none will grasp it save those who possess understanding.' (3 : 5)

The physician, mathematician and philosopher al-Razi, in his commentary on the Qur'an, maintains that when there is some decisive argument showing that the outward meaning of an expression is not intended, it is not proper to try to interpret that expression at all, for he says, metaphorical meanings of an expression can always be many and preference of one over the other is bound to be conjectural, as it is always based on linguistic arguments which should never be relied on in fundamental matters of religion.

In the following passage of his commentary, Razi gives some examples of the *mutashabih* and the *muhkam* on one subject ·

And an example of it (*i e.* of the *mutashābih*) from Qur'an is the expression of the exalted One :

> 'And when we desired to destroy a city we bade the opulent ones thereof, and they wrought abomination therein ; and its due sentence was pronounced ' (17 · 17)

The outward meaning of this verse is that they are bidden to act viciously, while the *muhkam* on the same subject is the expression of the Exalted One :

> ' .God bids (you) not to do abomination,' (7 : 27) rebutting the speech of misbelievers recorded (in the first half of the same verse) :
>
> 'And when they commit an abomination they say, "We found our fathers at this, and God bade us do it"...' (7 · 27) And likewise is the phrase of the Exalted One :

> 'They (*i.e.* the hypocrites) forget God and He forgets them.' (9 : 68) The outward (meaning) of *nisyan* (forgetfulness) is that which is opposite of awareness, while the outweighed (sense) of it is desertion. And the *muhkam* revelation of the Exalted One on the same subject is His phrase :
>
> ' . Thy Lord is never forgetful,' (19 : 65)
>
> and the words of the Exalted One :
>
> '. My Lord does not go astray nor forgets.' (20 : 54)

Razi refers more than once to how various sects apply the term *muhkamat* to the verses agreeing with their own persuasion, and the term *mutashabihat* to the verses disagreeing with their persuasion :

> 'And know that this is a very important passage. And we say that all the people of different persuasions assert that the verses agreeing with their own persuasions are the *muhkamat* and that the verses agreeing with what their adversaries say are the *mutashabihat*. The Mu'tazalite say that the verse :
>
> '...so let him who will, believe, and let him who will, disbelieve...' (18 : 28)
>
> is *muhkam*, while the verse
>
> 'But ye will no will, except God the Lord of the worlds should will.' (81 . 29)
>
> is *mutashabih*.

And the Sunnite reserves the position in the matter. A similar observation is made at a little distance from the above :

> 'And then we find the matter so that every one of (this or that) persuasion is clinging to it (*i e.* the Qur'an) according to his own persuasion. The Jabari (*i e* Compulsionist or the Predestinarian) clings to the verses signifying Compulsion (*i.e.* Predestination), such as His phrase :
>
> 'We have placed a veil upon their hearts lest they should understand it, and in their ears dullness of hearing.' (6 . 25 : 17 : 48 . 18 : 55)

And the Qadari (*i.e.* the Free-Willers) says, 'Nay ! this is the belief of misbelievers,' arguing that He, the Exalted One, has said

this regarding the misbelievers by way of censure in His (other) phrase :

'And they say, 'Our hearts are veiled from what thou dost call us to, and in our ears is a veil,' (41 : 4) and in another place (in the phrase) :

'The say, "Our hearts are uncircumcised"......' (2 : 82)

And he who affirms the doctrine of *ru'ya* (God's visibility) clings to His phrase :

'Faces on that day shall be bright, gazing on their Lord.' (75 : 22)

While he who negates it, clings to His phrase :

'Sights perceive Him not . ' (6 : 103)

And he who affirms to doctrine of Jihar (*i e.* God's location in space) clings to His phrase :

'They fear their Lord from above them.. ' (16 . 52) and His phrase :

'The Merciful settled on the throne,' (20 : 4)

while he who negates it clings to His phrase ·

'...There is naught like Him...' (42 : 9)

And so everyone gives the name *muhkamat* to the verses that agree with his own persuasion and the name *mutashabihat* to the verses that oppose his own persuasion.'[10]

What position does the Qur'an assign to man ? When God had created Adam he told the angels that Adam would be His *khalifa*, His representative or vice-regent on earth ; He had breathed His spirit into Adam and commanded them to bow before him.[11] In another verse[12] men and jinns—that is, all creatures—are stated to have been created that they might serve (Him). The children of Adam are elsewhere declared to have been preferred to all creatures [13] What appears to be the most realistic statement from the point of view of actual human experience is the following .

'We formed man in the best fashion and then thrust away all to be the basest of the base, except those that believed and performed good works—for them there is unmeasured—reward.'[14]

The full implications of all the passages quoted above have not been explained in the Qur'an itself, and they seem to be no more than *obiter dicta* in a context where God's omnipotence and the certainty of punishment for the evil-doer are constantly repeated and emphasized. But almost equally constant are references to peoples who refused to believe and obey, and who rejected and inflicted sufferings upon the prophets sent to them. Even with a full and unqualified acceptance of God's omnipotence, the impression cannot be repressed that man is capable of deliberately chosing unbelief and disobedience by implication, possessing a power of choice that God's omnipotence does not eliminate.

This is what a study of the Qur'an, uninhibited by traditional theology, would suggest. But even before theology and jurisprudence had been developed, its study was influenced by other factors. 'Fatalism, the supreme negation of human free will, was the most noticeable metaphysical concept embraced by pre-Islamic Arabs.'[15] An inclination to believe in predestination already existed when the Qur'an was revealed, and it is reasonable to suppose that more importance would be attached to passages in the Qur'an which implied predestination than those which made allowance for free will. Still, we find a group upholding man's power of choice, and the views of this group were elaborated by the Mu'tazila and the Shi'as. The first and the most outstanding among the Mu'tazila was Wasil ibn 'Ata (d. 748).

He held that to regard the Qur'an as uncreated was inconsistent with belief in one God, because it meant the association with God of someone other than God. He denied that God predestined human actions. Death and life and all the vicissitudes of life came out of God's *qadar* (power), but it was unthinkable that man should be punished for actions he had committed by the will of God and for which he was not responsible. We must assume that man has freedom of will and possesses power over his actions. Later adherents of this school established man's responsibility for his actions by showing that good and evil can

be perceived and distinguished by the intellect. An-Nazzam (d. 845) taught that God could do nothing to a creature that was not for the creature's own good and in accordance with strict justice. Out of such ideas were evolved the Shi'a doctrines that God is apart from any evil actions and all His acts are in accord with wisdom and righteousness. God is all-powerful, but He does not necessarily do all the things he has the power to do. Man is a free agent, good and evil are matters of judgement by man's reason, and his actions must be judged by themselves without reference to any law which declares them good or bad.

The orthodox, or the majority, held and still hold the view that there can be no necessity upon God, even to do justice He is absolutely free and man must accept what He does. Man does not have the capability to distinguish between good and evil, and can know them only through God's teachings and commands. Abu Hanifa (d. 767) and after him Maturidi (d 944) do recognise that man possesses free will and is, therefore, rewarded or punished for his actions. No explanation is attempted of the nature of predestination and free will They are stated side by side as equal, if contradictory facts. Abu Hanifa admits that evil deeds are by the will (*irada*) of God—otherwise they could not happen—but he cannot bring himself to say that they are by the 'good pleasure' of God. It was not, however, the question of predestination and free will that was the main concern of the generality of Muslims, nor were they much concerned with the logical and philosophical consistency of their beliefs. The omnipotence of God had to be maintained even if it meant denial of free will to man even in a relative sense, and the Qur'an as the Word of God was as sacrosanct as God Himself. The Mu'tazila, who differed from the majority, were not free thinkers in the modern sense of the term, and they used their influence over al-Mamun (813-833) to have their views given an official semblance and their opponents persecuted. The test question was whether the Qur'an was created or uncreated, in other words, whether even the Word of God could be associated with God or not. The 'uncreated'

Qur'an has strong affinity with the Christian Logos—the Word that was with God, the Word that was God—and the 'created' Qur'an is a concept in harmony with the physical facts of revelation in a particular social and historical context. But ultimately the belief in the 'uncreated' Qur'an prevailed, and with it the tendency to give the Qur'an the nature of an Absolute, and ignore its historical character.

When the orthodox were compelled to resort to dialectics, they used it as a means to defend the already occupied position. Al-Ash'ari, whose position represents a reaction from the Mu'tazila, attempts to raise a purely rationalistic theology to the level of the Qur'an, the Sunnah (or example of the Prophet) and the Companions He adopted the middle course in the matter of predestination and free will In the language of his day, the power to act was identical with the power to create; human actions were creations Al-Ash'ari held that only God can create, man's power produces no effect at all on his actions God creates in man power (*qudra*) and choice (*ikhtiyar*). Then he creates in him his actions, corresponding to the power and choice with which he has been endowed So the action of man is created by God, relating to initiative and production, but it is acquired by man. By such acquisition is meant that man's action corresponds to the power and choice already created in him, without his having the slightest effect on the action. This accounts for the free will or the consciousness of it which tries to entail responsibility upon man.

Al-Ash'ari's reasoning is mere quibbling with words, and does not carry conviction. It received, however, the approval of the majority and was regarded as a decisive refutation of the Mu'tazila. But al-Ash'ari did no more than use the weapon of dialectics in defence of orthodoxy. It was left to Imam Ghazali to employ the argument of personal experience. His primary conception is, *volo ergo sum*, I will, therefore I am. It is not thought that impresses him but volition. God, the Creator wills; so does the soul of man. They are akin, therefore man can know and recognize God or, as a Tradition says, 'He who knows his own soul, knows his Lord.'

It is also recorded in a Tradition that the Prophet said. 'God, the Most High, created Adam in His own form (or likeness),' which is confirmed by the Qur'an (38.72). From this Imam Ghazali concludes that there is likeness between God and man in essence, quality and actions. The spirit of man rules the body as God rules the world. The human body is the microcosm as the universe is the macrocosm. But God is not simply the soul of the universe. He is the Creator of all by His will, and he sustains and destroys all by His will.

Once the orthodox had come to a conclusion in regard to predestination and free will, no further speculation on this question was permissible and, therefore, none was permitted It was the sufis who then took the initiative Muhiyuddin Ibn 'Arabi, or Shaikh-i-Akbar, the Great Shaikh (1165-1240), is regarded as the founder of sufi metaphysics, the basic doctrine of which was the Unity of Existence, *Wahdah-al-Wujud.* But Ibn 'Arabi has little to say about predestination and free will. His conception of Unity must have made this question appear irrelevant. The sufis gradually accepted his doctrines, and they find poetic expression in the works of Jalaluddin Rumi. But one of his followers, Shaikh Abdur Razzaq Kashani (d. 1329), who was also an independent thinker, has discussed predestination in some detail.

We are not concerned here with his metaphysics, except that he establishes a correspondence between the universe and man as between a macrocosm and microcosm His exposition of predestination centres round the interpretation of three terms, *qada*, *qadar* and *'inaya* *Qadar*, which is usually taken to mean decree or command, Shaikh Abdur Razzaq explains as the existence of universal types of all things in the world of Universal Reason. *Qadar*, the usual meaning of which is measuring or apportioning, is for him the arrival in the world of the Universal Soul of the types of existing things. After being individualised in order to be adapted to matter, these are joined to their causes, produced by them and appear at fixed times. *'Inaya* is, broadly speaking, Providence, and covers both *qada* and *qadar*, just as these two compre-

hend everything that is actual. In other words, *'inaya* is the divine knowledge, embracing everything as it does, universally and absolutely. Further, while the essence of *qada* is part of the *'inaya* of God, its entelechy (*kamal*) is in the world of Universal Reason. Shaikh Abdur Razzaq identifies the Preserved Tablet, referred to in the Qur'an, with the Universal Soul, for on it are preserved, unalterably, all the general conceptions which are on their way to the individual heavenly souls.

It is the world of *qadar*, of the Soul, which sets everything in motion.

The relationship between the macrocosmic scheme and predestination and free will is highly complicated, with a remote first cause and an infinity of intermingling secondary causes as we approach the physical plane. It is possible for man to look at these last only, and so to assign absolute creative and decisive power to his own will, or to look at the first cause and become a fatalist. He must, therefore, preserve a balance and hold by both. The complete cause of anything into which human will can enter must have an element, among others, of free will, which sets all other elements in motion. Shaikh Abdur Razzaq seems to imply, though he does not clearly state, that man has in him an element of the divine deciding power. If there is freedom in the divine nature, there must be freedom also in man—one of its emanations.[16]

The mystics cultivated the belief that the true *wali*, the man of God, could rise to a position where, through his *du'a*, his prayer to God, he could become a participant in the governance of human affairs. It was faith in the potency of the *wali's du'a* which made people flock to him, and the number of legends about the miraculous powers of the *walis* effaced the distinction between the natural and the supernatural, the possible and the impossible, in people's minds Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya is reported to have said that everything happened according to God's will ; but this rather fanciful statement, is also attributed to him that while God's command descended from above, prayer (*du'a*) went up

from below, and if they clashed, the one with greater power would have things its own way. What deserves serious attention, however, is the view implied in Shaikh Abdur Razzaq's speculations, that in considering the question of free will and predestination we must look at things from the microcosmic and the macrocosmic level. Putting things in our own terms (though without the explicit support of any traditional authority), we could say that the macrocosmic span of existence extends from Creation to the Day of Judgement. With reference to this span, God's will is absolute, its fulfilment immediate. Human existence is here a purpose within the Purpose of God's will. The microcosmic span of human life extends from birth to death. God's will is operative here too, but, as Shaikh Abdur Razzaq says, with an infinity of intermingling, secondary causes. We see it as law and justice, as moral command and obedience within the opposite poles of good and evil, which are necessary for meaningful existence at the microcosmic level. There is an essential harmony, an essential unity between the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, but the same thought-processes, the same types of reasoning, would not apply to both, as the laws of macrophysics do not apply to microphysics, and *vice versa*. This interpretation of Islamic belief, like Islam itself, would be true only for those who believe. It can be rejected by those who doubt or deny it. Such persons, or groups, or societies who offend against God and His will both at the macrocosmic and the microcosmic level, who, to use the language of Muslim theology, deny God's unity, His omniscience, His omnipotence, and who associate others with God or deliberately adopt evil ways, ignoring the final judgement, deserve to be punished. The duration of such punishment is indicated in macrocosmic terms as eternal, if the denial of God is deliberate and absolute or, in microcosmic terms, as depending on God's will and His mercy, if the offence against God and His commands is mitigated by awareness of sin and repentance.

A fresh study of Islam, uninhibited by previous thinking, began with Syed Ahmad Khan, the founder of the Muhammadan

Anglo-Oriental College, which later became the Aligarh Muslim University. He held that any Muslim who possessed adequate knowledge could exercise the right of interpretation, and himself exercised this right in a manner that exasperated the *ulama*. But on the question of predestination and free-will he argued on the same lines as Imam Abu Hanifa or Imam Ghazali, though not without a modern touch

'I think, and anyone who sets aside the principle of adherence to authentic opinion will most certainly agree, that the *ulama* have misconceived the nature of the Qur'an. This has two aspects · one, that it is the Qur'an, revealed by God. It is my belief that the Qur'an is, word for word, the revelation of God The other aspect is the determination of its meaning, the eliciting of its purpose and intention. From this point of view the Qur'an is like something composed by a man with full power and beauty of expression, and just as we examine what such a man says and decides and what he intends and means to say, in the same way we would literally interpret the Qur'an, and for this purpose recognise no distinction between the language of the Qur'an and the language of man. For, after all, the Qur'an was revealed in a human language, the tongue of the people of Arabia, and so, though it may be entitled to reverence on the ground of its being a divine revelation, it is, for purposes of understanding and interpretation, no different from something uttered by man '

Syed Ahmad Khan's views on predestination and free-will, which should have made it possible for the Muslim· to be guided by his conscience and not by tradition, appear to be dialectical and essentially superficial.

> 'That First Cause which possesses true knowledge of all the conditions under which it acts is what we call *Taqdir*. That is to say, according to our thinking, *Taqdir* is God's knowledge. So if that First Cause, on the basis of true knowledge, says that such a one has been guided and such a one misguided, such a one has been created that he may go to heaven and such a one that he may go to hell, that is perfectly correct.

Reference to this to itself is due to its being the First Cause, and statement of the results is based on its true knowledge. This does not mean that any agent (i e. the person who was created for heaven or for hell) was necessarily acting under compulsion.'[17]

Dr. Iqbal's doctrine of Personality, of man fashioning himself into an assertive and creative power under God, held out great promise. He went so far as to say,

'Raise your Self to such heights that God, your Self beholding,
Should ask of you, Tell Me, what is your Will.'

But this exaltation of man ends in what is no less than an intellectual collapse. For the Selflessness to which the Muslim should aspire, is nothing beyond the observance of injunctions in regard to prayer, fasting, *zakat* and pilgrimage, an observance that has been a habit for centuries.

In one sense a Muslim has no freedom at all. he has been created only that he might serve God,[18] and God has acquired him body and soul, with all else that he possesses.[19] In another sense he enjoys the greatest freedom, for belonging as he does to God, it releases him from every form of bondage. This is the interpretation that has been put on these verses by the sufis generally. In practice, every Muslim who believes that he must live according to the *shari'a*, which comprises the creed as well as the law, follows the *shari'a* as defined by his sect or by one of the four schools of jurisprudence (Hanafi, Shafi'i, Maliki and Hambali) which are recognised as orthodox But the law has curious anomalies The ruler is not bound by the *shari'a* in the sense that he is not answerable to the community, the *millat*, or the divines, but only to God, and he must be obeyed unless he forbids the religious practices enjoined by Islam and upholds *kufr*, or unbelief. The officers of the ruler who have to carry out his commands are answerable only to the ruler. A Muslim who holds, but does not propagate, heretical beliefs commits no cognisable offence. A Muslim who disregards traditional practices or taboos, is answerable only if he claims that

he possesses theological status and maintains that his own views or practices are more correct than those prescribed by tradition. The Qur'an enjoins abstinence from intoxicating drinks, but the *shari'a* does not—in India, at least—forbid the smoking or eating of opium. A Shaikhul Islam of Turkey is alleged to have declared that a man who drank coffee was a *kafir*; nevertheless coffee became a favourite beverage. The flesh of the pig is among the things absolutely forbidden, and Muslims have abstained from it in all countries and all times, but no punishment has been prescribed for it, and drinking wine or liquor is a sin that can be atoned for by repentance, but not an offence punishable under the law Adultery is a sin as well as a legal offence, but the evidence required to establish guilt would make it almost impossible to prove the parties guilty unless they themselves, or one of them, made a voluntary confession But the niceties of the law are based very largely on traditions whose validity is as often as not open to question, and on interpretations which are valid only if recognised by the ruling authority as well as by the consensus of the majority. In India, the majority of Muslims followed and the state enforced the Hanafi system of law, except where rulers and their subjects were *Shi'a*, in Egypt, the Shafi'i system has been followed According to the Qur'an, a Muslim should show gratitude to God by enjoying all that has been permitted. 'Eat and drink and do not waste; indeed, God is not a friend of those who waste'. This is modified by another passage. 'You will not attain the good (or righteousness) unless you spend out of that which you love.'[20] The intention of the Qur'an, if all such statements and modifications were taken together, would appear to be that men should lead a clean, healthy life, requiring each one to do what is known to be good and avoid what is regarded as evil,[21] on the understanding that God does not place on anyone a burden heavier than he can bear,[22] a principle which would apply to religious observances, conduct and needs of physical life.

REFERENCES

1. There are references in the Qur'an to a book or tablet, with meanings which differ according to the context.
2. These extracts have been taken from D. B. Macdonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory*, Lond., 1903, Appendix I.
3. From '*jabr*', meaning 'compulsion'.
4. Dr. Daud Rahber, *The God of Justice*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1960
5. That is, punishment in this world and the next.
6. Rahbar, *op. cit.*, pp 63-64
7. The reference here is to the prophets sent and the successive revelations.
8. Rahbar, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113
9. Azad, *Tarjuman al-Quran*. Edited and translated into English by S. Abdul Latif, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1966. Vol. I
10. Rahbar, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-203
11. Qur'an, 38·72 and 2 . 28
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15. F. Rosenthal, *The Muslim Concept of Freedom*, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1960
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20. Qur'an, 3.86
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THE STATUS OF THE INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE IN ISLAM

EVERY MUSLIM WHO talks or writes about Islam has the feeling of being a reformer. It appears to him that the judgements of Western scholars are prejudiced and disrespectful, while traditional presentations of Islam are mostly inadequate or irrelevant to our times. He has, therefore, to guide those willing to accept guidance, the *ulama* or the conservatives or the modernists or the indifferent, who are by far the largest number, towards a genuine understanding of Islam I have no intention of becoming a reformer My purpose is merely to attempt a re-examination of our approach to Islam, and I am doing this because such re-examination has to be a continuous process if we are to prevent belief and practice from becoming habits, and for that reason, sterile, if not lifeless Sensitive Muslims, in particular the sufis, have always realised this Long ago, Shaikh Ainul Quzzat Hamadani said, 'Worship of habit is idolatry, true worship is that which releases us from habit,' and Shaikh Nizamuddin Auliya referred to prayer and fasting and haji as things any old woman could do, manliness required us to get beyond them During the last three hundred years, however, movements of revival have led away from the spirit to a stricter adherence to the letter. Some good has, beyond doubt, resulted. Superstitions have been given up, rights asserted, and in the matter of rights I think particularly of Syed Ahmad Shahid's successful insistence on the remarriage of widows But in all such reforms, conscience was brought in to re-inforce theological argument. Religious thought

in the real sense is absent, only a piety has been aimed at that would derive consolation and strength from a more correct or thorough conformity with the law. The Muslim was called upon to think only that he might be more firm in his adherence, in *taqlid*.

Syed Ahmad Khan was an intruder in the theological world, but his re-examination of beliefs is extremely significant, because he brought critical reason into religious discussion and challenged the principle of *taqlid* itself Apart from what he considered the fundamentals of the faith, he took nothing for granted. We may think what we like of his effort to show that the Qur'an's teachings were in accord with scientific knowledge, that jinns and angels are not what they have been believed to be, his commentaries on the Qur'an and the Traditions represent the thoughtful Muslim's right to think for himself. But Syed Ahmad Khan's whole argument is vitiated by his criterion of progress Of course, he believed that he was looking for the truth, but what he considered to be truth were only the scientific ideas and what might be called the reasonable materialism of his time

Syed Ahmad Khan abjured religious discussion in order to establish an educational institution; Maulana Azad, who had perhaps much more to say and who was not inhibited by any concept of science or progress, thought it better to remain vague on such an important issue as to whether the Muslims ought or ought not to have become and remained a separate religious and political community But he did suggest an attitude which, if sincerely adopted, would have revolutionised our life. The Muslim, as a believer in God who is the *rab*, the Providence nurturing, sustaining, guiding mankind, should regard it as his function to nurture, to sustain, to guide those among whom he lives. Maulana Azad could be regarded as having performed this function to the best of his ability, but it demands a degree and a quality of simultaneous involvement and detachment that is beyond normal comprehension, and his suggestion seems to have remained almost unnoticed. What needs to be clarified is not how a Muslim can

be a good Muslim, but where he should act according to his conscience as a Muslim and not rely on theological support.

What is meant by conscience in the context of this discussion is that sense of right and wrong which governs our everyday conduct and the recognition of the obligation to do what is right. This sense is strong in some persons, generally it is weak, and depends on the example of others and the direction of social opinion. So it is only very rarely that we determine for ourselves what is right and what is wrong. Generally, we follow social practice. Muslims who felt bound as a matter of conscience to repudiate any aspect of such practice appealed to the highest authority, the Qur'an, but the right of appeal was itself circumscribed. Only those acknowledged as possessing the necessary knowledge could make use of this right of appeal, and they, in their turn, had to follow the system of interpretation adopted by some school of jurisprudence. This brings us back to the position that right and wrong in matters of religious belief and practice are determined by social opinion and established habits of thought. The conscience of the individual Muslim has had to find satisfaction in adherence to one of the accepted system of interpretation of the Qur'an and the Tradition.

The Qur'an does not prescribe any such adherence. It recognises both the community of believers and the individual believer, and does not ignore the possibility of the community being in the wrong as well as the individual member. "O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for God, even though it be against yourselves, or your parents and kinsmen, whether it concerns rich or poor, for God is nearer to you than both And do not follow caprice, so as to swerve (from the truth)."[1] The Prophet's example and his injunctions would serve as something to be adhered to only for those of his contemporaries who were able to observe his behaviour and to ask him questions. The Traditions, as they have come down to us, have already undergone an intepretation in terms of accepted ideas and practices, and though we may not agree with Syed Ahmad Khan's view that all the Traditions

are just reports of statements made by the Prophet or of the things he did and, therefore, binding only if they appeal to our reason, we cannot ignore his view either. The methods for scrutinising Traditions were laid down long ago just because all reports and reporters were not reliable.

This whole question of adherence can be considered also from another angle. Is belief to be regarded as something static or dynamic ? This is not the same as asking whether beliefs should or should not change with time and circumstances, but involves an inquiry as to whether there is something in the nature of belief itself which makes it an expanding and developing force. Is there anything, for instance, in our belief regarding the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims that could make it a healthy, creative element in our present-day democratic life ? Historical situations in which certain attitudes were prescribed in the Qur'an, or the deductions made from these prescriptions are no longer relevant. The Indian Muslims have no opponents like the Quraish of Mecca, they do not have to deal with Jewish and Christian and other tribes, they have no opportunities for expansion such as the Muslim Arabs had in the seventh and eighth century, they are not a state that has to consider possibilities of peace and war with non-Muslim states. The categories of *darul-Islam* and darul-harb do not apply, and the neutral category of daral-amn would imply not only passive acceptance of the present situation but an abdication of the obligations and rights of citizenship. Are we, in this situation, to look for some theological authority to guide us, and to wait passively till this authority is found ? Or are we to act according to our conscience and continuously remind ourselves that we must be 'securers of justice, witnesses for God,'[2] not only for ourselves but the whole political community of Muslims and non-Muslims to which we belong ?

As a matter of history, the Muslim conscience has found ways and means to release the Muslim mind from confinement within the idea of a rigid division of beliefs into true and false and of a community regarding itself as the sole possessor and upholder of

true belief. Ibn 'Arabi has become the symbol of the doctrine of the Unity of Existence, *wahdahal-wujud*, but belief in immanence is found much earlier. The Unity of Existence, as expounded by Ibn 'Arabi, is complicated and abstruse; it would not have caught the imagination as it did and would not have found such fervent expression in sufi thought and in poetry if there had not been among Muslims a subconscious urge to acknowledge all humanity as co-existing with the Muslim community and the right of non-Muslims to profess their own faith. It was the Muslim conscience which made sincerity and constancy and not allegiance to Islam the test of true belief, and which made Akbar ask the fundamental question : Have the beliefs of men no common ground ?

In the political field, however, the Muslim conscience failed to become operative. The Umayyad dynasty suppressed ideas and tendencies subversive of its authority. Even more fatal was the attempt of the Mu'tazila to enforce acceptance of their doctrines through the power of the state, as it led ultimately to an alliance between the orthodox *ulama* and the government, and established unfortunate precedents of interference which made freedom of thought and even scientific inquiry a matter of grave risks. We could excuse the orthodox *ulama*, perhaps, if they refused to give theological support to those who opposed the existing political and social order, but they went much further and did all they could to identify the religious interests of the Muslim community with the interest of the ruler, placing him virtually beyond the judgement of his subjects. Equality before God remained, but it was more than neutralised by the forms of inequality created by the policies of the rulers. This meant complete domination by those in power who, though always a minority, posed as the representatives and upholders of the majority point of view in all matters, and it was logical that the majority opinion should prevail, specially in questions of belief and practice. Thus this hypothetical majority was regarded as equal to the whole community, which was identified with the existing political and social

order; this, in turn, was identified with the best interests of the *ummah*, and, therefore, of Islam. *Taqlid* meant, in this situation, the abrogation of the individual Muslim's right to hold an independent opinion about right and wrong, in other words, elimination of his conscience. What a farce *taqlid* could degenerate into became very obvious in the second half of the 19th century, when Muslims had lost every vestige of political power and the religious-minded were forced to practise the type of casuistry which the poet Akbar ridiculed

You can wear these socks and shoes
And make love to Miss D'Souze,
If only you fast and pray
You can live and love as you choose.

During the same period, the creative potentialities of belief were reduced even more by apologetics, whose appeal to sentiment increased with time. The modern Muslim's listlessness, his lethargy, his disregard for his own welfare, his betrayal of a great religious and cultural heritage was contrasted in eloquent terms with the faith, the energy, the splendour of earlier times. The Muslim was so carried away by the eloquence of the apologists that the achievements and the glories of the past came to life again, and the experience was so vivid and intense that the present was merged in the past, and the most spineless subject of the British Raj transformed himself in imagination into a conquering world force. Apologetics also generated a pride which made the Muslim look down on others, and if forced to face reality, he excused or even justified his own degradation by arguing that others were worse. Another aspect of apologetics derived from the resentment created by the judgements on Islam by Western orientalists. The beliefs and practices embodied in the *shari'ah* of Islam were not studied more deeply to refute unfavourable criticism, only everything Islamic came to be admired with greater fervour. The facts of history were forgotten, incidents not very significant in themselves were magnified into permanent characteristics. For instance, if Muhammad Tughlaq once appeared

before a qazi to explain his conduct, or Jahangir had a bell put up in his palace which any person unjustly treated could come and ring, this was enough to characterise Muslim rulers as upright and just. I shall not multiply instances. Even a cursory examination will reveal that apologetics inculcated an approach to Islam and Muslim history that was completely unrealistic and distorted.

It is from this confusion of sentiments and ideas that the mind and the conscience of the individual Muslim has to be salvaged.

Where and how do we begin ?

The traditional answer to this question is that, as the matter concerns belief and practice, the *ulama* as a body, or the *imam* or leader must propose what should be done. The principle implied is that the community must change as a whole, otherwise there will be a mass of conflicting individual opinions with no authority behind them. On the other hand, the *ulama* have been insisting for centuries on the completeness and the perfection of the *shari'ah.* They cannot conceive of any amendment being necessary, because the circumstances of life or the demands of a a particular situation are not recognised as a valid argument. Even the present position of Muslims in India, to say nothing of the political, social and economic revolutions that have taken place in the world, cannot make them think of a re-examination of what they consider the injunctions of the *shari'ah.* If driven into a corner and forced to admit the need of a re-examination, they will insist that anything done must be with the consent of the *ulama* as a whole. What authority they have for assuming this position of arbiters in matters of religious law is by no means certain, and even a cursory study of a book of *fiqh* will show that on many points there are differences of opinion, and the accepted view is only one that is to be preferred. It is clear, therefore, that the *ulama* as a whole have almost never been in agreement, and if thoughtful Muslims had not been afraid of exercising their own judgement, the *ulama* would have possessed no status or authority at all.

The functions of the *imam* as a religious leader have not, to my knowledge, been laid down anywhere. In the law-books, *imam* and *amir* appear to be interchangeable terms, that is, the ruler could be called *imam*, as he could be called the *khalifa*, on the basis of the traditional appellations of the first heads of the Arab Muslim community—*khalifa*, *imam* and *amir al-mo'minin*. The *ulama* were, in practice, subject to the ruler, and that is why rebellion against the established ruler has been made theologically unjustifiable, except when he becomes a *kafir* and enforces *kufr*. Akbar raised an interesting point in regard to the status of the *sultan-i-'adil*; that, however, is something which could be discussed endlessly. For, while according to the ruler almost unlimited power as the possessor of political authority, the *ulama* were not willing to assign him any religious status.

It is more relevant for our purpose to consider whether anyone could be a leader, let us say, of the Sunnis in a religious sense, having authority, by virtue of his religious and spiritual pre-eminence, to exercise the right of *ijtehad*, of giving new interpretations or interpretations differing from those of the orthodox schools. There have been persons who have been called *imams* and *mujtahids* out of respect for their learning, and generally after their deaths. I do not think, however, that the possibility of such a leader has been contemplated. The concept of *ijtehad* has been made much of by apologists, as if it implied the right to think afresh and regard as obsolete and without force the thinking done and the opinions already expressed on any matter of law or religious practice. In fact, it seems to me, *ijtehad* has only a technical significance; it is the exercise of the right, by someone possessing the necessary prestige, to give an opinion, differing in some considerable degree from the opinions already expressed by theologians of prestige and regarded as more or less conclusive. Those who disregarded the authoritative texts would be considered innovators deserving of condemnation. Syed Ahmad Khan's ideas would not be regarded as an example of *ijtehad*; they were condemned as heresies and innovations. Maulana Abul Kalam

Azad's contribution is also not *ijtehad*. Dr. Iqbal, when arguing in the style of an apologist, regarded *ijtehad* as an adequate provision against outmoded thinking, but he was afraid even of liberalism. He was a great poet who made generations of Muslims crazy with self-admiration, but his contribution to religious thought, when objectively examined, contains nothing that could be called *ijtehad*

Anyone who wished to exercise the right of *ijtehad* has had to show from where he derived his right His awareness, his moral sense, his ideal of creating a better society, not being theological values, could not be regarded as giving him the right. In the second half of the 15th century, Syed Muhammad of Jaunpur, a person of extraordinary learning, spiritual insight and moral courage, was deeply moved by the irreligiosity and moral decadence of his time. He wished to transform the profession of Islam into an absolute commitment to the spiritual and social values embodied in the faith. We have no record of any of his discussions with the *ulama* of his days, but it seems they could never prevail against him. However, Syed Muhammad was forced, by the tactics of the *ulama*, the enthusiasm of his followers or his faith in his own mission, to declare that he was the *Mahdi*, the expected saviour of the world. This claim at once became the point of orthodox attack, and a theological pandemonium resulted in which the real teachings of Syed Muhammad became of secondary importance even for his followers, and no change came about in Muslim society and its way of life. In our own times, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian attempted *ijtehad*; he, too, was forced into, or adopted a position similar to that of Syed Muhammad, claiming to be Christ returned to earth, and disputing the accepted interpretation of the Qur'anic verse which declares that the Prophet Muhammad was the last of the prophets. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's life, if objectively examined, shows that he was aware of the perilous condition of theological Islam, of Islam as expressed in doctrines and as represented by the *ulama*, that he realised that Western civilisation was based on social and

material values for which a proper place would have to be found in the Muslim mind and that, in spite of the decline of the Muslim peoples, Islam could spread as a religion among the nations of the West. I am not interested in the claims Mirza Ghulam Ahmad made for himself, but I am interested in the reasons why he made the claim. Possibly it was because success is a heady wine which few can hold, and he felt that, having established his position as a reformer and a theological disputant, he could go to the limit and aspire to be a prophet. He had measured the theological and intellectual capacity of the *ulama* and might have felt that they would not be able to challenge him effectively. But supposing he had not made the claim to be a prophet, what would his position have been? A mere *'alim*, a theologian with novel ideas who would have many to applaud, but none to follow him, or a political leader with a religious bent of mind who would be considered a loyalist, a kind of Khan Bahadur under the special protection of the British government. He would have had no recognised form of authority, he would not have been able to lead and guide and command His movement would, in any case, have aroused controversy, but it would have fizzled out as a mere controversy if he had been content to remain an *'alim* or a religious-minded political leader.

Muslims in general were so shocked by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's claim to be a prophet that his genuine contribution was completely ignored. He had committed a theological crime which could not be forgiven. They gained nothing whatever by their opposition to him. He, on the other hand, became the founder of a religious community, a well-knit organisation able to look after itself and also after a liberal-minded group within it which became the spearhead of its missionary activity. But the sect of the Qadianis, in order to justify its existence, has had recourse to theological arguments, and narrowed rather than broadened the approach to Islam.

It seems, then, that neither the *ulama* nor the hypothetical leader can find a way out. The only possibility is that the con-

science of the individual Muslim should be his guide, and should be recognised as the only guide.

There are statements in the Qur'an which indicate clearly that societies were punished collectively. This is a matter of history. In the Qur'anic dispensation itself, the responsibility for his actions, good and bad, is entirely on the individual 'Upon that day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his consort, his sons, every man that day shall have business to suffice him.'[3] And it is also said, 'And whoever does a righteous deed, be it male or female, believing, we shall assuredly give him to live a godly life; and we shall recompense them their wages, according to the best of what they did.'[4] This is not, however, something new. It was revealed to the prophets Moses and Abraham also 'that no soul laden bears the load of another, and that a man shall have to his account only as he laboured, and that his labouring shall surely be seen and that he shall be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense.'[5] Where responsibility is thus placed squarely on the individual, he cannot go around asking for advice, or plead, when a reckoning takes place, that he was wrongly advised.

Having said what I have about theological argument, I realise that it is inconsistent for me to quote from the Qur'an to prove my point. In fact, I think it wrong and unfair to the Qur'an itself to take a verse and use it to fortify an argument. The Qur'an was meant to inspire, and not to be quoted from, and though many of its verses can be taken to represent the whole of its spirit, the contexts of its verses are not those that precede and those that follow, the real context of every verse is the whole of the Qur'an. Piety and habit and the instinct that makes us evade responsibilities we cannot bear have made the reading of the Qur'an a mechanical process. We do not read in order to contemplate; we read for spiritual merit. This we cannot show that we have attained, and the results of contemplation we miss altogether. We must look to the Qur'an for the stimulus to spiritual experience It is only through such experience and not

through clever interpretations that we can give it genuine contemporary significance; in other words, make it an operative force in our personal lives and, collectively in our society.

I have emphasised experience of the Qur'an rather than an academic study of it because its statements are, in the crucial matter of man's free will, plainly contradictory. 'If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but He leads astray whom He will, and guides whom He will, and you will surely be questioned about the things you wrought.'[6] There are many verses of the same tenor. If we attempt a logical explanation, we get confused. If we accept these verses as true, contemplate the nature of God's omnipotence and what flows from it, we shall find the contradiction resolved. Belief is not something which comes of itself, like hair on the head, it is an act of will. If we read the Qur'an for inspiration and guidance, it is an act of will. If it is not that, then what the Qur'an says of the hypocrites applies to us also. 'Do the people think that they will be left to say, We believe, and not be tried? We assuredly tried those that were before them, and assuredly, God knows those who speak truly and assuredly, He knows the liars.'[7] Man's free will is, in the Qur'an, assumed It is God's omnipotence that has to be accepted, and to be accepted as an act of will. That we thereby also accept what is a reality is what the Qur'an wants us to understand, and that is why the Qur'an 'lays an abomination upon those who have no understanding'[8] The Qur'an is, in a way, a dialogue between God and man, where man has spoken through his actions in history, and God expresses His judgement on the actions, asserting the all-comprehending nature of His power. Islam, as submission to God's will, is not passive acceptance of what happens and what does not happen (and thereby throwing the responsibility of all our inertia and purposeless living on God), but an active association of our will with His in the realisation of the highest of which human nature is capable 'O believers, if you help God, He will help you and confirm your feet.'[9]

It is in this light that the status and function of the indivi-

dual conscience has to be considered, and not with fear in our hearts of the possibilities of error. Error, as commonly conceived, is a theological concept, a *deviation from the letter of the* law, which those who believe in the letter and not in the spirit condemn because it endangers the system they have built up. The Qur'an takes a different view. 'Whoever struggles, struggles only to his own gain, surely God is All-sufficient nor needs any being. And *those who believe and do righteous* deeds, We shall surely acquit them of their evil deeds and shall recompense them to the best of what they were doing.'[10] In another verse it is said, 'If you avoid the heinous sins that are forbidden you, We will acquit you of your evil deeds and admit you by the gate of honour.'[11] The heinous sins referred to here have to be deduced from other verses, and that is a task which theologians have performed with relish But the reference here is to those who, of their own will and with the fullest understanding become God's friends[12] and agents, in the spirit of the verses, 'Then We appointed you viceroys after them, that We might behold what you would do,'[13] and 'It is He who has appointed you viceroys in the earth and raised some of you in rank above others, that He might try you in what He has given you.'[14] It is a reference to men and women generally, and not only to members of the Muslim community, to all whose conscience is alive and alert, and who act according to their conscience in all matters of importance, but also inevitably commit mistakes. Fear of such mistakes, they are told, should not deter them , they should do the best they can.

What they should do is indicated only in general terms, such as good deeds and righteous deeds, "bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour." It is the believer who determines specifically, in the light of his conscience and under the circumstances in which he lives, what a good and a righteous deed is and what 'honur' and 'dishonour' imply. But belief and good deeds are mentioned so often together that we must assume that they cannot be taken apart, that one is impossible without the other. The theologian will insist that belief comes first, and with belief all the

forms of obedience, prayer, fasting, zaket, haji. But he must not be allowed to stop there. He must be equally specific about the particular forms of good and righteous deeds, and as insistent on their being performed as he is about prayer and fasting. He would have done this, perhaps, only we must understand that it is not his function. His field is law and precedent, the precise fulfilment of clearly defined duties. He cannot apply his standards in matters where the individual has to decide for himself. He has, therefore, been of the view that there are no such matters, that the *shari'ah* is all-comprehending and perfect. We must part company with him and with his rigid concept of the *shari'ah* if we are to act in accordance with our conscience for the fulfilment of the obligations that the Qur'an has laid on us, as an entirely individual and personal responsibility to God.

II

The first question every Muslim must ask himself today is whether he really regards Islam as a universal religion or only as the religion of those who call themselves Muslims. The theological statement, based on the authority of the Qur'an, is that the true faith has been revealed to all mankind through prophets, not all of whom have been mentioned in the Qur'an by name But the peoples to whom the true faith was revealed have deviated from it, the deviations of the Jews and the Christians specially being commented upon in the Qur'an. The Muslims have believed that they are rightly guided, and some theologians have gone so far as to guarantee forgiveness and heaven to anyone who has recited the formula of the faith But there are doubts also about certain sects, and about the mass of the ignorant who, for lack of guidance, hold theologically reprehensible beliefs, being really and truly Muslim. Theologians apart, Muslims in general, who are proud of their faith and sure of being rightly guided, forget the conditions that are almost always attached of sincere belief and performance of good works whenever anything is said in the Qur'an about believers and Muslims It is also forgotten that the Qur'an mentions that there are believers also among the Ahl-i-kitab, the Jews and the

Christians.[1] But the inclination of the theologian or the ordinary Muslim to exclude does not affect, in Muslim belief, the universalism of Islam. We may conclude that Islam is a universal faith revealed by God to all mankind, that the Qur'an is, as it says, 'an exposition for mankind and a guidance, and an admonition for such as are god-fearing[2], and the verse, 'We try you with good and evil for a testing, then unto Us you shall be returned'[3] is addressed to all humanity, Muslim and non-Muslim.

If Islam is a universal religion, and among mankind are those who believe, those who only profess to believe and those who do not believe at all in the one God and His guidance, all problems should be considered not in the light of Islamic theology and history only, but in the context of world history. We must know how the human conscience has operated among all the peoples of the world at all times, in the light of the status which the Qur'an assigns to man in creation, and of the directives it has given: 'O believers, be you securers of justice, witnesses for God'[4] and 'Let there be one nation of you, calling to good and bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour '[5] We must study the history of all religions, their beliefs and practices, not to see how far they have deviated, for of that God alone is the judge, but how close they are in essence to the fundamental human faith. And we must not confine ourselves to religious beliefs and practices We must study, for instance, the lives and thoughts of all those who, like Socrates, set examples of that examination of beliefs and actions which is implied in 'bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour,' that diagnosis which reveals ignorance and hypocrisy, that idealism which seeks to create a society based on justice and that determination to suffer all the physical consequences of struggling in the way of God which is the hall-mark of true Muslims. We must look everywhere to discover when and how the Islamic values which we believe in have been realised in practice. And we must be willing to judge ourselves as we judge others, for

unless we do that, our claim to be believers will not stand impartial scrutiny. 'O believers' the Qur'an says, 'be you securers of justice, witnesses for God.' This part of the verse I have already quoted. But the Qur'an continues, 'Let not detestation for a people move you not to be equitable; be equitable, that is nearer to god-fearing.'[6] Muslims have had friendly and hostile relations with different peoples, and the judgements of contemporaries, both Muslim and non-Muslim, are liable to prejudice our own, to the extent even that we cease to look for the good in other people and see it only in ourselves In India, Muslims have lived for centuries with the Hindus, and it would require a supreme effort of our conscience to arrive at an impartial and just assessment of the historical record. Christians and Muslims have fought against each other for centuries, events and circumstances have made feelings of hatred and hostility almost a permanent quality of their relationship, and though in the balance it might be shown that one party is more to blame than the other, the Muslims are under a definite obligation to be equitable in their judgement.

We must give the Western peoples, even if theologically they are not such Christians as they ought to be, full credit for having at last abolished slavery. We ourselves should have done it much earlier, but we preferred to impose on ourselves the social framework of seventh century Arabia, without any regard for the fact that the merit of freeing slaves was an obvious indication that we should grow out of this framework. These same Western peoples ultimately succeeded in establishing political democracy, as a matter of conscience and not religious belief, while we have, from the establishment of Umayyad rule onwards, suffered despotism to continue, with only individual protests on grounds of conscience, though such despotism is neither permitted nor contemplated in the Qur'an Imam Ghazali advised the good Muslim to avoid spiritual contamination by keeping away from kings, courtiers and government officers, and good Muslims followed his

advice. There would have been bloodshed and suffering if they had obeyed the Qur'an and attempted to fulfil their obligation of being securers of justice. But democracy and the ideals of political freedom and legal equality were not achieved in the West without bloodshed and suffering extending over centuries; the Muslim peoples did not act in the same way because their conscience was not assertive enough to break the fetters of theological opinion. That democracy should be the form of all Muslim government may not have been explicit enough in the Qur'an to prevent despots from bending theological opinion in their favour, but nothing could be more explicit than the responsibility of the administration to help the needy with the resources created by the collection of *zakat* The first Khalifah levied *zakat* by force from Muslim tribes unwilling to pay it, the second Khalifah set instructive examples of personally helping the needy, even the non-Muslims. Then we have the instance of the Umayyad Khalifah, Umar bin Abdul Aziz, who ruled only for two years, and the obligation of using *zakat* for assistance and welfare ceases to be recognised, although some rich and pious persons console themselves with acts of philanthropy. The welfare state of today owes nothing to Muslim idealism or the exercise of the Muslim conscience. But it is nearer to the ideals of Islam than any Muslim system of administration after the first two Khalifahs

There was much religious persecution among Chirstians in the Middle Ages and up to well within modern times. There are examples also of persecution of Muslims by Muslims, but the burning of heretics among Christians has no parallel in Muslim history As against this we must set the ideals of service cultivated by the Christian monastic orders, ideals which continue to be acknowledged and served in different ways in our own times There is nothing to compare with this in philanthropy as practised among Muslims Then, there was the revolt against the domination of the Roman Catholic and later of the Protestant churches, an apparently intellectual but basically spiritual revolt. The result was a cultivation of knowledge for its own sake and at all costs,

leading to the advancement of learning and science which we see today. There was no church among the Muslims, only an alliance between the rulers and the orthodox *ulama*. Philosophers, scholars and scientists like Shaikh bu Ali Sina and al-Beruni were, however, constantly in fear for their lives. They would have felt safer, and hundreds of others would have been willing to take risks for the advancement of knowledge if the Muslim conscience had not been cowed down by theological opinion and betrayed the cause of intellectual and scientific inquiry. The surrender of conscience was so complete that religious knowledge suffered quite as much as any form of secular study. What we have done for the exposition of Islam during the last two hundred years is ridiculously insignificant in comparison with the contribution of non-Muslim scholars to Islamic studies. Perhaps they are lacking in reverence and sometimes obviously prejudiced. But their study of the sources is deeper and far more thorough than ours, and merely condemning their prejudice does not prove our being in the right.

If it is evident from world history that the principles of Islam can be realised in practice by non-Muslims, what considerations should, as a matter of conscience, govern our conduct under the present political and social conditions?

Nationalist Muslims have looked for theological authority to support their view that the Indian Muslims should form an integral part of the Indian nation There is no such authority. An objective judgement of persons, ideas, movements is possible only through the exercise of an enlightened and sensitive conscience. If the individual conscience had been given the status that rightfully belongs to it, the argument of world history would have been more than enough The Muslim could show that non-Muslims were not only capable of realising but had in fact put into practice the Islamic principles of equality and justice, and that it was the primary duty of the Muslim, as a matter of conscience, to cooperate with his non-Muslim fellow-countrymen for the attainment of freedom and the establishment of a democratic welfare-state.

Unfortunately, the weight attached to theological authority gave those whose main consideration was self-interest the opportunity to propagate the ideas of an Islamic state. The explicit claim put forward was that the Muslims were a separate nation, the implicit claim was that the Muslim was a different type of human being, with moral and social responsibilities which the non-Muslim could not share with him.

The Muslim state is a well-known historical and contemporary phenomenon, the Islamic state is a fiction created by the Indian Muslim mind. Muslim rulers have done their best to show that in their policies they served the interests of the Muslims and Islam, generally by exhibitions of intolerance and by waging wars against non-Muslims. The *Hidayah*, a thirteenth century compendium of religious law, considers all wars against non-Muslims as *jehad*, and the spoils of aggression could thus be acquired along with spiritual merit. But no Muslim ruler would have dared to risk an assessment of his administrative and political actions on the basis of Islamic doctrine That would have made the nature of his irresponsible, despotic rule far too obvious. But the Islamic state which the enthusiastic, or rather the hysterical Indian Muslims dreamed of was not a purified Muslim state They believed that God's omnipotence could not be qualified or modified; therefore, no person or body of persons or even the Muslim community as a whole could be sovereign There could be no legislation that was not certified by the *ulama* as being consistent with or at least not inconsistent with the injunctions of the Qur'an An aspirant to spiritual and temporal leadership has gone so far as to declare that only men known for righteous living should be elected to the legislature or appointed to offices This concept of the state and its functions reveals how disastrous has been the dissociation of the Indian Muslim mind and conscience from public affairs, even when the rulers were Muslims. There was personal loyalty to the ruler, but no personal involvement, no loyalty to the state as an institution Everyone looked after himself and God looked after the state

This was not, however, the attitude of the Muslims only. It has been the general Indian attitude throughout history. The national movement united us against the British government; since independence the absence of a personal and unqualified commitment to the state and the common interest has become distressingly clearer. The individual conscience has not been brought into play as a power controlling and directing actions and creating healthy patterns of social and civic behaviour, the general tendency is to sit back and expect others to do what should be done.

It is not my purpose here to give general guidance to Muslims as to what they should do I am concerned with only one aspect of a vast and complex problem, and that is the status of the individual conscience. I consider this aspect not only important but crucial, as it is his conscience alone which can give the individual Muslim the awareness of his duty to exercise his initiative and the confidence that God wills that he should exercise it.

I do not wish to repeat what I have said already about the idea of an *imam* or a leader. It is our weakness and not our conscience which makes us look for him •The question of the solidarity of the Muslims as a community is different. It has become apparent in many ways and at many times that there is an element in the majority community, we do not know how large or small, but we do know that it can be effective in its destructive measures, which will continue to reject us so long as we continue to remain a distinct community with its own beliefs, way of life and economic interests. We cannot, and we should not, for that reason give up our concept of a community. But I have already stated that the principle of adherence, as understood and insisted upon for several hundred years, can undermine spiritual and intellectual freedom. As a matter of history, I do not think the Muslims have had a common religious front after the Prophet, unless we identify Islam with the opinions and policies of the majority, whether Hanafis, or Shafi'is or Shi'as Under the

conditions prevailing today, the organisational difficulties of constituting a common religious, political or economic front would be insuperable. We would not, however, pin our hopes on a concentration of forces if we had faith enough in the individual Muslim conscience to rely on a dispersal of forces, each unit, however small, and each individual acting in accordance with his own conscience, and in the interest of truth, justice and generosity. The concept of an organised community, committed to the attainment primarily of what is good for itself, makes it necessary for its members to distinguish between themselves and the members of other communities, and this is being done in India by almost all communities, though only the Muslims are openly reproached because of it. If the function of Islam is to unite and not to divide, it must be left to the individual Muslim conscience to decide how far in particular situations the maintenance of distinction is necessary or advisable. And it is only for the individual Muslim conscience to determine in what ways it can serve the spiritual, moral and social ideals of Islam

We must remember that, in spite of all that has been said to impress on our minds the significance of the community, Islam is in essence an individualistic religion. There is no church, there is no intermediary between the individual Muslim and God, to whom his responsibility is immediate and personal. Men and women have the same obligations, and are subject to the same judgement. Property, though a trust, is held by the individual, and marriage does not affect a woman's rights to hold property. The true Islamic spirit seems to be that the individual should uphold the community as an act of his own will, and not that the community should absorb the individual will into its own.

There are problems in which, it seems to me, the concept of community has been adhered to to a controvertible extent, and in which we look to theology for guidance instead of reason and conscience

When the Sarda Bill was being discussed in the Central Legislative Assembly, those Muslims who were aware of the practice of

child marriage among Muslims and its unhealthy consequences preferred to keep quiet or were induced by the pressure of community opinion to oppose its application to the Muslims The only argument for this was that an Assembly with a majority of non-Muslim members had no right to legislate for the Muslims in matters concerning their personal law It seems to me that the more valid theological argument would have been to oppose the bill on the ground that the age of consent was too low, and marriage being a contract, it could not be entered into by a minor. If the age could not be raised, the girl should be given the right to repudiate the marriage, if she so desired, when she came of age. The argument against non-Muslims tampering with the *shari'ah* was weak, because judicial decisions had already tampered with it in the matter of a daughter's right to inheritance, and there was no consideration shown to the *shari'ah* in the penal code or any other branch of law under British rule As it turned out, the Muslims in demanding exemption from the Sarda Bill lowered their prestige in the eyes of all thoughtful persons

Islam was the first religion to convert marriage from a sacrament into a contract, from a ceremony essentially religious into a public and legal proceeding Now, instead of trying to make their own socially more just conception of marriage generally accepted the Indian Muslims are allowing themselves to be regarded as defenders of polygamy, or conscientious objectors to monogamy, whichever might be worse. It should have been a matter of conscience for all thoughtful Muslims, and in particular the lawyers to come forward with contract forms of marriage that would preclude bigamy; instead, they drift into the position that the consensus of the *'ulama* alone can permit changes in their personal law, knowing very well that there will be no such consensus, even if all the *'ulama* could be brought together. We shall only confirm the view that is already gaining ground that though we might be quite reasonable as individuals, as a community we are imprisoned, mentally and morally, within a completely static religious system.

I shall now again raise the question: Do we conceive of

Islamic belief as something static or dynamic?

Islam means submission to God's will. God's will was revealed in the Qur'an. But everything that happened before and after the Qur'an was revealed, also happened by the will of God, and we are supposed to see in everything that happens the working of God's will. We cannot disregard events; the Qur'an itself refers to those of the past and also to contemporary occurrences. A reference back to the Qur'an for what has happened, and in spite of what has happened since would mean that the working of God's will since the revelation of the Qur'an is to be disregarded. If it is to be disregarded, we must have clear authority for doing so, and I do not know of such authority. The Mu'tazila believed that the Qur'an was created. Their view was not accepted, perhaps not even examined as it should have been, for reasons that were less theological than political, and the present orthodox view prevailed, that the Qur'an is eternal truth. But even that does not oblige us always to look backward, for we do not go back directly to the Qur'an but to its interpretations and to semantics of the Arabic language.

As belief and practice, Islam was perfected in the Prophet's lifetime, but the development of jurisprudence itself shows that many questions had to be answered that arose because of the change of circumstances, change of the environment or the context in which Islam was being practised. Later, the acceptance of the principle of *taqlid*, whatever the reasons behind it, put a stop to the development of religious thought, and it was not events and occurrences but the old texts that were studied to discover the working of God's will. It is the great contribution of the sufis that they broke through the rigid framework of *taqlid*, claiming to establish a direct relationship between man and God through the guidance of the *shaikh*. This relationship, however, suffered from being too restricted. At its best it was spiritual experience and ecstasy, in its ordinary form it was just an escape from the world of events and occurrences, and from the study of God's will as revealed in them. But sufism stands out, none the less, as a symbol of the self-assertion of the Muslim conscience.

The question how we can submit to God's will unless we know how it is seeking and finding expression still remains unanswered. It is not enough to say that everything is predestined. God is omniscient, we are not God's omnipotence and omniscience is emphasised in the Qur'an, but the individual is also held responsible for his beliefs and actions. We cannot, on the assumption that God has already willed what is going to happen, abstain from action which to reason, to human reason, appears beneficial or necessary. We have to understand for ourselves the attributes of omniscience and omnipotence, the necessity of belief, the necessity of submitting to God's will through good works, through 'bidding to honour and forbidding dishonour,' through the establishment of justice This cannot be done in a vacuum, but only in this world of actions and events. It can only be done by individuals who are sensitive and intelligent, who are engaged in a constant endeavour to enlarge their awareness and whose conscience compels them to commit themselves to the cause of truth and justice. Islam is a dynamic faith demanding continuous involvement of mind and energy in the affairs of the world for the fulfilment of the purpose for which man was created; there can be no complacency, no self-satisfaction. The conscience of the Muslim must ever repeat to itself and others: 'Nigh unto men has drawn their reckoning, while they in heedlessness are yet turning away'[7]

REFERENCES

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4. *Ibid.*, XVI, 99.
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6. *Ibid.*, XVI, 95.
7. *Ibid*, XXIX, 1.
8. *Ibid*, X, 99.
9. *Ibid*, XLVII, 9.

10 *Ibid*, XXIX, 5.
11. *Ibid.*, IV, 35.
12. *Ibid*, X, 64.
13. *Ibid.*, X. 15.
14. *Ibid*, VI, 165.

II

1. Qur'an, III, 106.
2. *Ibid.*, III, 132.
3. *Ibid*, XXI, 36.
4 *Ibid.*, V, 11.
5. *Ibid*, III, 100.
6. *Ibid.*, V, 11.
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SUFISM IN INDIA

WHEN ONE IS dealing with people whose survival and influence depended on making the search for truth a solemn and exciting adventure of the spirit, one must begin by talking in their style, the style which offends commonsense and provokes the mind, so that one must sit up and listen So I begin with the first paradox that occurs to me If laws could not be broken, they would not have been made

If human beings could live together in peace and happiness, respecting or at least making full allowances for each other's needs and desires, laws would not only be irrelevant; it would be an offence to think of making them But human history begins with Cain murdering his brother Abel, and almost succeeding in concealing his crime. That may be only the Jewish version of the beginning of history, and of why God made it a habit to meddle with human affairs, but it is symbolic of what must have happened, wherever and whenever human history had its beginning. And again, according to the Jewish version, which is most intimate and revealing, when God found His motives being persistently misunderstood and even His presence being ignored, He gave increasingly precise and emphatic expression to what He had in mind. Ultimately, He had to inscribe His laws on the hearts of the pious and on the tongues of the preachers. This is all symbolic, of course, but the fact is that when the first Muslim mystics, or sufis as they are called, looked around at life and began their search for truth, they were appalled by the amount of law-making that had been, and was still being, perpetrated. People said, there

must be, there is, a law to cover every aspect, every minute detail of human affairs, man must be yoked heart and soul to the law, for it is the law which represents truth, which ensures salvation. Knowing that man, wittingly or unwittingly, is constantly guilty of transgression, God had, in His Mercy, enabled him to construct a system of law that was complete in all respects and would endure for all time.

But, the sufi asked, can this be absolutely true ? Is it God's will that man should never rise above the level of thought and action fixed in the law-books ? Was man to be guided in his relations with God by legal precedents and technicalities ? Surely, God is not an angry and jealous autocrat, sitting eternally in judgement upon his own creatures. He is the God of Mercy and Solicitude, the Father who expects and exhorts His chidren to live up to the ideal He has set before them. His will cannot be cofined within ass-loads of books. If He made laws, it must be His will that they should be broken, so that higher laws, which are closer to His will, might come into operation.

So we arrive at an entirely different interpretation of the paradox that laws would not have been made if they could not be broken The paradox becomes a challenge. One must abhor the evil intentions that make laws and their enforcement necessary, one must despise the attitude which reduces man, in the words of a French writer, to a 'bourgeois compromise'. One must break laws so as to rise above them, to become one's own lawgiver, and look to God not for punishment and reward but for exalted guidance. This point of view loses its stimulating character unless it is expressed with a measure of extravagance It was better to follow the example of Mansur Hallaj, to declare, 'I am the Truth', and suffer the consequences, than to preach and practise tranquility. But, of course, each sufi had his own disposition, his own way of breaking the law to demonstrate that the letter must be sacrificed to the spirit. Some broke the law in regard to the five daily prayers and thirty days of fast by praying and fasting most of their time, some by not praying and fasting at all Ain al-Quzzat

of Hamadan declared that all worship performed as a matter of habit is idolatry; only that worship is real which releases the mind from the thraldom of habit. The sufis did not criticise and reject each other's views They created instead the fiction that sufis were of two types, the sober and the intoxicated, that is, those who were careful because of the effect their words and actions might have on the generality of the Muslims and those who threw caution to the winds in a drunken ecstasy, and could not be called to account for anything they did or said. This makes it difficult to define sufism, it also makes the sufi infinitely more attractive

Till about the middle of the eleventh century, there was no system of *shaikh* and *murid*, teacher and disciple. Those who believed in a higher life decided for themselves what they would do about it, and they sought each other out, travelling sometimes hundreds of miles, for comparing methods and experiences Then many of them became sedentary, living in a *khanqah* or *tekieh* with their disciples and practising their particular form of spiritual discipline But the number of those who did not accept the obligations of community life and a fixed routine was always large and influential in many inconsistent ways And even when sufism came to be widely recognised as a system of life and thought, and books began to be written for study, the daring aphorism, the challenging paradox, remained the symbol of self-expression.

From about the eleventh century, poetry also became a medium for the sufi. Orthodox Muslims should, if they are strict enough, hold the same views about poets and poetry as Plato. But Jalaluddin Rumi went to the other extreme The poet, he said is in part a prophet, only an ass would say that poetry is forbidden Muslim culture has reconciled the two attitudes by regarding love, beloved, union, wine and song, Islam and *kufr*, Kaaba and temple, as symbols, and the poet who used these symbols strikingly enough was recognised as a mystic who desired to show the way to exaltation and ecstasy to annihilation in God.

So not only have collections of verses been attributed to almost every great sufi, but all the great poets have been given the status of sufis. Poetry can never be profane, if it is good poetry. In other words, aesthetics, if genuinely and successfully cultivated, becomes ethics and religion and spirituality.

Whatever other cultural offspring the marriage of sufism and poetry may have had, it generated in man a boldness which brought him into intimate converse with God God was the judge who was sure to embrace the sinner brought before Him with a forgiving smile, the Friend and Beloved who placed a halter round the neck of His lover, and dragged him where He listed, the embodiment of all Beauty and Charm who nevertheless flashed angry looks around to wound most grievously those who adored Him most, the Omniscient and Omnipotent Being wearied by His labour, whom man could invite to come and rest in his bosom. One begins to wonder whether God made the poet or the poet created God. Either interpretation seems to be correct and neither seems to matter. What does seem to matter is the intensity of spiritual experience, the occurrence of the moment when man realises that he is the whole of existence

SECULARISM AND SUFISM

SECULARISM IS TODAY one of the most established intellectual fashions. Few know exactly what it means, except that it is not religion. There are people who profess secularism because it is something enlightened persons ought to believe in, and who at the same time continue to practise most of what is required by their religion. There are people who call themselves secular because they do not wish to be bothered with any questions about the ultimate purpose and aim of life There are people of goodwill towards all religions who hope that a common profession of secularism will prevent religious conflict. Secularism is something safe to believe in, because then no one would venture to ask why. It is a fashion, and fashions are followed, not examined

The best way to understand secularism is to consider its history It is derived from a Latin word which means a generation or an age; the adjective secular has several meanings, and secular used as a noun means a priest. In the Christian world of the Middle Age, men and affairs were divided into the religious and the worldly. There were men who lived, or aspired to live, the higher religious life, and there were those content to be mere earthly creatures. There were, similarly, affairs of the spirit, of piety and salvation, symbolised by prayers, devotions, and celibacy and other forms of self-denial. These were the concern of the Church, with its hierarchy of priests, and of the monastic orders. Worldly men spent their lives in efforts to acquire power and wealth, or to be just happy in their own way. In theory, the

religious life was the higher life, but the Church also needed power and wealth to maintain itself, and came into conflict with kings and princes, who regarded power and wealth as their right. Gradually, in a large part of Europe, which was intellectually and economically most active, religious men and religious affairs were dislodged from their pedestal, the men because they were aggressively narrow-minded, the affairs because they had come to be regarded as irrelevant Life was focussed around the aggrandisement of political and economic power, and happiness was taken to mean possession of the means to be happy. If its history is any indication of its meaning, secularism is the belief that we must concentrate our attention on the physical world and live as best as we can by getting out of it all that it has to give The scientific and technological progress of our times and the high standards of living in the economically advanced countries are believed to be a direct result of the secular outlook.

But man is so constituted that he cannot place himself exclusively in the category of the physical Secularism and the secular outlook may appeal to him in most ways and most of the time, but he is driven by his own nature to look beyond his physical needs and his physical existence. So, while secularism was propagating itself through the success of the statesman, the scientist, the bourgeois entrepreneur and the intellectual, a compromise was made between the secular and the religious view of life. A man could be as religious as he liked, but his religion would be his own concern ; he would not demand that others agree with him He could ask for religious liberty, but not for power His religion would be personal, and kept out of purely secular matters It cannot be said that this compromise has been fully accepted. Even in politics, and even in the most advanced countries, views on purely secular matters are influenced by religious affiliations, and some would say, not without reason, that no matter is so exclusively secular as not to affect religious belief to any extent The most outstanding repudiation of the secular approach is the power and prestige of the Roman Catholic Church

This is not, however, to deny the validity of personal religion, or its deep influence even on those who have professed secularism. Genuine religious belief is always intensely personal.

This personal religion, with its inevitable emphasis on sincerity, has been the link between all religions, which differ widely in externals but are one in essence. It is a link also between secularism and sufism.

Sufism was for centuries an intellectual fashion among Muslims. Just as secularism is non-religious and capable, if forced into the position, of becoming anti-religious, sufism was non-orthodox and liable to become an opponent of orthodoxy. This aspect of sufism was deliberately and continuously brought to the forefront by the poets, who never tired of ridiculing the hypocrisy of the pious externalist. But negation of the value of orthodoxy as an end in itself was only a minor aspect of sufism. The positive elements of sufism lay in the assertion that the relationship between man and his Maker can be direct and independent of any and all agencies of transmission regarded as essential by the orthodox, and in the belief that this relationship could be established best through the guidance of the *shaikh*. The *shaikh's* guidance, however, was necessary only till such time as the *murid* could, spiritually, stand on his own feet. When he could do so, he himself became a *shaikh* and a guide for others.

When it became a fashion, sufism developed its own ritual, its externalism Those who believed in it became even more other-worldly than the orthodox *ulama* who, however they might have talked about the ephemeral nature of worldly goods or worldly happiness, could not ignore the commandments in regard to worldly obligations. The element of personal religion, of direct relationship with God became diluted into a philosophy which, conceiving all existence as a unity and all occurrences as manifestations of God's will, undermined the urge for creative and constructive activity. But this came later. In its period of vigour, sufism did represent a revolt against blind conformity, social injustice and suppression of the individual

If the conception of religion as essentially personal is common to both secularism and sufism, the differences, however, must also be stressed. The emphasis of secularism is on religion being a private affair, in the spirit of everyone minding his own business. Religion is personal in a political and legal sense, and the intention is not to strengthen religiosity but to prevent it from becoming a disruptive factor. Personal religion can mean no religion, any religion or even allegiance to a community holding the same beliefs, provided that this allegiance does not come into conflict with the state or with the established social and economic order. The ideal of secularism is to eliminate religion both as a criterion of judgement and as a source of inspiration, and to make man as far as possible self-sufficient It is assumed that man has the capacity to be self-sufficient, and if someone does not have the capacity, well, all the worse for him If he breaks down morally, and offends against the law, he will be punished. If he finds that he cannot have a personal religion without the support of an organised, traditional belief, he can remain within the religious community in which he was born or find such a community and join it

This attitude is completely foreign to sufism, which seeks to intensify religion by making it personal. Its opposition to orthodoxy, to religion as transmitted in theological literature and followed as a matter of habit is on the ground that such religion is mere imitation, lifeless and uncreative Belief has to be personal, the product of one's own spiritual experience: only then can it be real belief. And the aim of sufism is not to create better physical conditions but better, more complete, richer personalities, rejoicing in a self-sufficiency which comes to them as a spiritual gift

The study of institutional religions, sufism or secularism as stages in human development should not make us feel that man's journey has come to an end. Past, present and future will continue to merge into each other and new forms of thought and life will come into being Institutional religion gave us the

values which we now seek to embody in the welfare state—the ideal of the whole political community being concerned with giving every member his full share of opportunity, work and wages, of priority being given to the interest of the weakest, and fundamental rights being assured to all. Sufism is now seen in a wholesome concern felt by individuals and groups of like-minded individuals for the whole of humanity. Children, political sufferers, victims of natural calamities get willing help from international organisations, which are supported by philanthropic individuals who regard philanthropy not a matter of choice but of duty The spirit of obedience to the moral command, given through the heart by Him who rules the hearts of men is as alive as it ever was. Religion and sufism have become anonymous as the higher forms of secularism, which may well evolve its own poetry, as sufism did, and lead to new forms of spiritual experience.

THE MUSLIM MIND IN POLITICS

SPASMODIC ASSERTIONS OF a unity of interest and ideal, specially because they have been made in opposition to some other interest, have created in the Muslim mind the conviction that the Muslims are one community with one way of thinking. The Muslims themselves have not examined this conviction in the light of their normal way of living and thinking, and do not appear inclined to do so even now But Muslim history, both in India and outside, bears ample evidence of great political, moral and social tensions, and the Muslims would understand themselves and make their behaviour as a community more intelligible to others if they frankly recognise the existence of these tensions and their disruptive effects.

The fundamental question that arose after the death of the Prophet was To whom does the right of leadership belong ? This question became morally very significant when the right of leadership was arrogated to themselves by persons who did not lay claim to piety and did not disguise the fact that they ruled because they had the power Apart from the Shi'ah sects whose complicated metaphysics concealed the fact that they were really movements of protest against misrule and injustice, the sufis and the righteous *ulama* repudiated on moral grounds political authority as exercised by the rulers We have in the early Sultanate period a remarkable instance of this repudiation Sultan Alauddin Khilji and Shaikh Nizamuddin Awlia were contemporaries. Alauddin Khilji was a powerful ruler who was determined to root out opposition , he was very competent and very successful, but Shaikh

Nizamuddin Awlia, who felt in duty bound to meet anyone who desired to meet him, refused to meet the Sultan. On one occasion when the Sultan insisted, he let it be known that if the Sultan entered by the front door, he would leave his *khanqah* by the back door. Shaikh Nizamuddin Awlia did not hesitate to advise people against seeking government service. There is every reason to believe that the Shaikh was loved and honoured by hundreds and thousands of people and his attitude towards the Sultan and his administration could not have remained a secret, and must have undermined the prestige of the Sultan. Later on we have numerous examples of sufis who were on good terms with Sultans. Perhaps the sufis were not as strict as they should have been or perhaps the Sultans themselves were less inclined to be brutally assertive and themselves sought the advice and blessings of sufis, but the tradition that the good Muslim who was anxious for the welfare of his soul should avoid Sultans and courts persisted.

The *ulama* who studied jurisprudence, served as judges and *qazis* and *muftis* or received pensions from the court to carry on their studies and indirectly assist in maintaining the religious prestige of the state evolved a theory of right based on power. We have instances of these people being cornered and forced to declare their honest opinion, which was not different from that of the righteous *ulama* and the sufis. But they supported the rulers and the rulers depended on them. They were mainly responsible for making government the embodiment of power, and of depriving the Muslim of the right to rebel against unjust governments. But even the righteous *ulama* realised very early in Muslim history that opposition to the state on moral and religious grounds would deprive people of whatever peace and security the state could give them without a political order being set up that would be based, in theory and practice, on religious law. So the fiction that the Muslims were a community at once religious and political and that political authority was a means of maintaining the *shari'ah* became something of a desperate belief. Political life was a cracked surface so painted over with religion that the cracks came to be

regarded as a necessary part of the surface.

The idea that power was the basis of authority made it essential for the rulers to make a display of wealth and might. They had to overawe their subjects with their magnificence, to win their admiration through spectacular acts of justice and munificence, and to impress them with the swift execution of their decisions. While remaining almost inaccessible to the common man, they had to show that merit of any kind did not escape their notice. The conduct of successful rulers who knew how to strike the imagination of the people established a pattern which imprinted itself on the minds of generations, and became a standard of judgement. The British were admired because in many ways they seemed not only to follow but in a sense to improve upon the traditional standards. The democratic national leaders did not attract the Muslim masses because there was no pomp and pageantry about them, they did little or nothing that was spectacular and, above all, they had no personal power. If Mr Jinnah had not been arrogant and aloof, if he had not shown by his treatment of his subordinates that he had power and knew how to exercise it, if he had not arrogated to himself the sole authority to think and decide, the Muslim League would have had little success under his leadership.

Democracy as taught by Islam still has a firm hold on the mind of the Muslim. It is something of which he is justly proud. But it is one of the basic contradictions in his pattern of thought that he does not identify political democracy with Islamic democracy. He wants a leader saying and doing spectacular things; fellow-citizens actively engaged in discussing public affairs, electing representatives, insisting that all must be politically equal do not impress him. He does not regard the state as a moral entity; only the Muslim community as a whole could claim moral status, and that, too, only if the *ulama* and the people were of one mind on some religious issue. But if somehow the craving for a leader could be extinguished, the whole pattern of Muslim thought would gradually change, because then the Muslim would feel that he

must reconcile himself to a government which can spend only in accordance with a budget, which consists of ministers and administrators who cannot do spectacular things and must think before they act, because they are answerable to an assembly for everything they do. Understanding of this system of government would bring him closer to his fellow-citizens, with whom he has many common interests, and these common interests would then acquire a moral quality.

The question whether Muslims can under religious law accept the Indian Constitution and be loyal citizens is not a new question. As I have stated earlier, Muslim governments also could not be recognised by religious law except through some constructions placed on particular verses of the Qur'an, that the government today happens to be non-Muslim or secular makes no material difference. A government, according to the jurists, had to be obeyed unless it propagated unbelief, which meant unless it prohibited Muslims from praying, fasting, performing the pilgrimage or following their personal law. The present government allows the Muslims full freedom in matters of religious belief and practice. It has, therefore, to be obeyed. Loyalty, as something higher than habitual obedience, is a virtue that needs to be cultivated by all Indians, not the Muslims alone. Both among Hindus and Muslims there must be a realisation of the moral nature of the democratic state. Obedience in an active, creative form will be an outflow of the identification by the conscience of the citizen of political with moral obligation. It is only such citizens who will establish the cooperative, socialistic society which is our ideal

IDEAS AND MOVEMENTS OF SOCIAL REFORM AMONG INDIAN MUSLIMS

THOSE WHO ADVOCATE social reform of any kind in any society are sensitive persons who desire to eradicate some ailment or injustice from which their society is suffering. Their judgement is based on certain first principles in the light of which practices, habits, customs, laws appear to them harmful or unjust, and the intensity of their belief in the first principles and, of course, their own type of personality determines the means and methods they adopt. The reformers as well as the society they endeavour to reform both have a history, and this history, which reveals the ways in which the mind of a particular society has worked, must be studied if we wish to understand how the spirit of reform has operated. Indian Muslim history has not yet been studied from this point of view. Certain things are accepted just because they have been constantly repeated. The structure of Indian Muslim society has had little resemblance to the democratic, classless community integrated and inspired by belief in the One God which the Indian Muslim fondly imagines it to have been and we may be sure that it is not the mere organised bigotry, fantacism and ignorance, which it appears to be to its detractors. Indian Muslim society has been a very complex organism, containing within itself healthy and unhealthy tensions, and forces of growth, stability and decay. The tensions, in particular, deserve close study, because they have throughout Indian Muslim history exercised a decisive influence.

One fact must he emphasized at the beginning. Islam did not come into India as pure belief and practice unaffected by change and time. It came here as the religion of Arabs and Turks and Iranians, as an institutional religion the law and practice of which had reached a degree of development where people felt that further development was not possible, and change and innovation would be subversive. Monarchical rule had been accepted as the only possible form of government, and fear of anarchy had placed not only practical but theological restraints on opposition to or any control of rulers by subjects. But dynastic monarchical rule was against both the letter and the spirit of Islam, which has enjoined government by consultation, and this rule had to be bolstered up by transparent legal subterfuges. The personal lives and the administrative methods of the rulers were such patent violations of the religious law that even the official representatives of the law, the *ulama*, could not condone them, and as a result the state lost all moral prestige and authority. It had to support itself by methods of propaganda with which the totalitarian states of our own times have made us familiar. The rulers claimed to be defenders and protagonists of the true faith, but they could not legislate or exercise religious authority of any kind except as executive agents of the *ulama*, the learned in the law, with whose opinion they happened to agree. Equality, one of the fundamental social principles of Islam, had shared the same fate as democracy. The Arabs had assumed that they were superior to the non-Arabs, the Iranians had retaliated by doing their best to present the Arabs as uncultured nomads, and the Turks who came to India regarded government as their exclusive privilege on grounds of race. Finally, the man who earned his livelihood by his own labour, whom the Prophet had declared to be the friend of God, was definitely subordinated to the soldier. Imam Ghazali, who wrote in the late eleventh and early twelfth century, has not listed soldiering among the eligible professions of the Muslim, while the *Hidayah*, a twelfth century work, which was the text-book on religious law studied in India, regards soldiering as a

form of *jihad*, a fulfilment of the religious duty of the Muslim to fight for the maintenance of Islam. This change in the attitude of the law reflected the structure of society that had been built up in spite of Islam, a structure in which the whole burden of supporting an upper class of soldiers, landlords, administrators had been thrown on the masses.

Let us examine the Indian Muslim state and society in the light of the above observations. It was the function of the state, or to be more precise, the sultan or ruler, to defend his subjects, that is, his kingdom, against enemies, to protect the orthodox faith, to maintain law and order, administer justice, provide for education and such welfare as he could find money for after defraying the expenses of the court, the army and the administration. The expenditure on the ruler and the court was, according to the recognised, orthodox law, unpardonable extravagance, a misappropriation of the community's property ; the methods of administration, again according to the law, were unjust, most of the taxes levied illegal, the punishments of offenders excessive. It was for the *ulama*, who studied and taught the law and administered justice in accordance with it in the civil courts, and whose highest dignitaries were advisers to the ruler in matters concerning religious and personal law to restrain political authority from transgressing against the law which it was its function to maintain, but the official *ulama* were themselves part of the administrative system. They could not, as servants of the state, assert their own judgement in guiding the policy of the ruler. They did not even try.

Perhaps they were not entirely to blame The corpus of public, mercantile, criminal and personal law, included in the *shari'ah*—which meant the Muslim way of life and was all inclusive—was itself a collection of learned opinions that did not possess the force of law. If a ruler disregarded them on grounds of public policy, or because it pleased him to do so, he could not be accused of having committed an offence against religion. Only a ruler who apostatised and prohibited the performance of public

prayers and other religious observances of Islam could be removed. But not even the most pious ruler could make laws in regard to any matter comprehended within the *shari'ah*. Even the consensus of the *ulama* could not make any change in the law. The most that could be done was to add another opinion, another interpretation to the body of opinions and interpretations that already existed. But this too, was not attempted.

We are here concerned primarily with the social structure, and the forces within it which operated to promote stability and change. What strikes us first is the almost total irrelevance of the orthodox *shari'ah* to the facts of Indian Muslim life. The theological texts, the authoritative works comprising Muslim jurisprudence, were all compiled outside India, and have in view not Indian Muslim society but the social conditions under which they were written. No changes were, or could be made to suit Indian conditions. If the governments or the *ulama* had been an agency for conversion, Muslim personal law might have been imposed on the converts. But the *ulama* were not interested, and the rulers forced conversion only occasionally for purposes of propaganda or punishment. If the vast majority of the Indian Muslims are converts, their conversion in the vast majority of cases was silent and voluntary, the actual reasons of which are a matter of conjecture, and by and large it was conversion of tribes, communities and families, not of individuals. As a result, even a bird's-eye view of the variety of beliefs and practices and customs prevalent among Indian Muslims will convince us that it was not the *shari'ah* of Islam that they adopted; it was the manners and customs and to some extent even their beliefs that became the *shari'ah* of Islam, of their Islam. Even today the Meos, who continued their practice of exogamy after conversion, regard cousin marriage as forbidden, even though it is permitted by the *shari'ah* and has been the rule rather than the exception among the generality of Muslims. It would be a legitimate subject of enquiry to determine how far the rights and duties of individuals, the status of women, the rules governing family life have been

Indian and how far Muslim. One field of reform that has been most inviting for the religious enthusiast has been to complete the process of conversion, to make the Indian Muslim into a proper Muslim in the religious sense by inducing him to abandon customs and practices forbidden in the *shari'ah* directly or by implication.

So here we have the picture of a society where the exercise of power is not subject to religious or moral control, where the official representatives of orthodoxy are more official than orthodox, and where the mass of the people—meaning here, of course, only the Indian Muslims—are in a process of conversion. But this is only a part of the picture. If circumstances operated in favour of the creation and maintenance of dynastic monarchical rule, there was also opposition to it on moral and religious grounds, and such opposition became a tradition. If, on the one hand, orthodoxy was taking shape and assumed a final form in the four schools of jurisprudence, there was, on the other, a rejection, open or implied, of orthodoxy itself by the mystics, who came later to be called sufis. If neither the rulers nor the orthodox *ulama* could undertake or sponsor social reform, there was, for the moral support of the sensitive individual the injunction of the Qur'an to command what is known (to be good) and to forbid what is not permitted. To make the fulfilment of this injunction socially effective, the individual aspiring to provide guidance would have to prepare himself through learning and a life of piety, and the greater the esteem in which he was held the greater his security against presentation or rejection

We have from the earliest times among the Indian Muslims examples of persons who, while they endeavoured to live according to the injunctions of the *shari'ah*, also expressed in their life ideas which conform to our own concept of social justice today. There were preachers who openly criticised the rulers for disregarding the religious law, who spoke bitterly against the official theologians, because they were embroiled in the affairs of the world; preachers who emphasised the aspect of love in Islam,

teachers like Maulana Alauddin Usuli who showed a rare integrity of spirit and preferred starvation to dependence on those whose ways of life he did not approve. There were scholars like Maulana Kamaluddin Zahid, who refused to become Imam of the Jame Masjid at the request of Sultan Balban and condemned the state as only an independent and deeply religious man could. We have at a somewhat later period a person like Shaikh Ali Muttaqi (b. 1480), who gave up government service and earned his livelihood through copying books till his hands and eyes failed him because of age. He reduced his needs to such an extent that he could carry all that was necessary for him in two bags, one of which contained only books He did all his work himself and would not allow anyone to serve him. This was a personal rejection of the exploitation that was generally practised and the affirmation of an ethical principle of the *shari'ah* that one should not exploit the labour of others for one's own benefit. Shaikh Ali's disciple, Shaikh Abdul Wahhab (b. 1536), has given us a definition of tolerance which is valid even today, even though the Shaikh was anxious to keep within the limits of the *shari'ah*. 'If anyone hears an opinion expressed,' he said, 'one should not repudiate it at once, even though it may appear to be false. One should first listen and consider whether one has really grasped what has been said or not, then one should, if possible, reconcile it with (what one believes to be) the truth. Otherwise one should reject it If even that is not possible, one should just leave it alone and go one's way without allowing one's faith to be shaken'.

Side by side with these examples of purely personal life and opinions we find the sufis giving advice to their disciples which was meant to promote a healthier organization of life. We find Shaikh Nizamuddin Awlia frowning at every reference to government service and being particularly nice to those who wanted to practise agriculture or some other socially useful profession His successor, Shaikh Nasiruddin, would remain silent if anyone asked him to pray that he should get some government job or service as

a soldier and blessed anyone who was an agriculturist or a craftsman and asked for his blessings.

It was a rule among the sufis to fortify their independence of spirit by practising what was called concealed starvation. We would not think of doing the same now, although we would agree that if a person genuinely believes in something he should be prepared to starve for it, and would admire anyone who gave up wealth or office in order to dedicate himself completely to the fulfilment of a morally or socially valuable idea. We cannot, therefore, honestly say that starvation for a good cause is out of date, and we must also be willing to consider the full social implications of the practice of those who believed that poverty or the courage to face poverty was essential for full independence of spirit

We have an example, in the second half of the 15th century, of a movement of social reform which made the acceptance of poverty a basic article of faith The founder of this movement was Syed Muhammad of Jaunpur and it has been called the Mahdawi movement, because it is believed that Syed Muhammad claimed to be the promised reformer or renovator of the faith about whose coming there is a vague tradition among the Muslims. We do not know all the details of Syed Muhammad's life, and all his teachings do not seem to have been systematically recorded. But in modern terms what Syed Muhammad taught was that the only means to end exploitation of man by man was that everyone should dedicate himself totally to worship of God and not think of what he would eat even to be able to live. This principle of total dedication to and total dependence on God is something which no believing Muslim can challenge, but the inevitable consequence of following this principle would be that while some would live entirely in accordance with the principle, the rest, that is, the vast majority would find some means of livelihood but also be careful to see that in earning their livelihood they did not practise injustice in any form When the Mahdawi movement started, state and society were organised on an open and shameless

system of exploitation. The peasant, the craftsman, the merchant were all at the mercy of the ruling class which, although it performed some necessary functions, was grossly parasitical. The only effective remedy was to reject and destroy this system altogether, so that a just and equitable system could take its place. Uufortunately, the persecution of the Mahdawis forced them to retaliate and the law of self-preservation compelled those who were benefited by the existing system to do all they could to crush the Mahdawis Thus a movement for social reform led only to the formation of a sect which had to adopt for its survival a kind of concealment of its beliefs This made these beliefs themselves ineffective outside the sect.

We have had in our own time in Mahatma Gandhi an example of the type which could be considered representative of Mahdawi ideal Gandhiji believed in total dedication to the cause of truth and non-violence and in non-possession of property of any kind. He did nothing to earn his livelihood, but still he lived and worked and set an example of total poverty as well as maximum social effectiveness We know what influence he exercised and how his ideal influenced our minds. We have now set aside his idea of reconstructing our life on a basis of poverty and adopted instead a standard of affluence which has to be attained. How far we are in the right or whether we are in the right at all is something we are finding out now.

But this is off the point. You would be interested in knowing more specifically about the most outstanding social evils and the means adopted to remedy them Despotic rule and exploitation have already been mentioned. Despotic rule could be replaced by a just system of government only through a revolution which is beyond the capacity of the social reformer. Exploitation is an evil that has in history mainly changed its form, though we can say that today it is not as naked and oppressive as it was in medieval or early modern times Apart from these basic evils, the most noticeable is the lack of integration The Muslims were followers of a religion which taught them to live as one communi-

ty and brought them together compulsorily for prayer. But there were differences of birth and status which congregation of this kind could not overcome. With lack of integration there was compartmentalisation of thought, which permitted the application of different standards to different classes of men and women. We are not open-minded enough even now to judge all human beings by the same standard, but in days when slavery was permitted and the distance between the upper and lower classes was even greater, compartmentalisation of thought prevented the free play of sentiments of justice and charity and limited the responsiveness even of those in whom these sentiments were active. There were free kitchens, no doubt, and philanthropists were not wanting who would build wells and sarais and schools and hospitals. But the sensitiveness to pain and suffering which brings together all the members of a truly integrated community was not cultivated as it should have been. The sufis, however, formed a noble exception. In the *dargah* or assembly room of the sufi those in distress got the most attention, and there was hardly a settlement without the *dargah* of a sufi.

The attitude towards women makes compartmentalisation of thought most evident. The 'free' woman, that is, the woman of respectable family, could not be made the topic of conversation She could not be written about in literature Even as late as the eighteenth century, Anand Narain Mukhlis in his *Safarnamah* conforms to this Muslim taboo by referring to his wife as 'the inside of the house.' In return for this honourable anonymity, the 'free' woman had to avoid being seen or heard even by relatives who were within the marriageable degrees Turkish women rode on horseback, but they had to be covered in a 'burqah'. The movement of 'free' women of other races and classes was subject to conditions that would prevent their being seen or heard. Women of the lower classes would also be regarded as 'free' if they observed the same rules of self-concealment as upper class women. These rules would probably not have been as strict as they were but for conditions of insecurity The 'free' woman had

to be protected, and they had to help by protecting themselves. No change in this system could be thought of until conditions of security had existed for a few generations.

The law gave considerable rights to 'free' women. They had, as Muslims, to fulfil the same obligations as the men, except that they were not enjoined to pray with the congregation. This meant that they had, at least, to be given religious education. It was their right that husbands belonging to the same *kufw*, that is, of equal social status and with the same cultural tradition, should be found for them. Any parent could be taken to task if he was slack in the fulfilment of this obligation to his daughters. A sufi of Delhi, Shaikh Bayazid, rebuked the Emperor Aurangzeb for not finding husbands for his daughters. 'The Prophet gave away his daughter in marriage', he said. 'Why do not you, who are a religious-minded king, give away your daughters in marriage ?' Women could inherit and own property in their own name. It was obligatory on the husband to pay or bind himself to pay to the bride before marriage what was called *mehr*, a sum of money, the amount of which depended on the social status of the family The *mehr* belonged solely to the wife, and as the marriage itself was not a sacrament but a civil contract, the wife could, if she liked, obtain a divorce by agreeing to forego the *mehr*. The marriage contract could be made on any reasonable terms, and a woman could, if she so desired, impose the condition that the husband would not, during her life-time, marry another woman. Again, because the marriage was a contract, both parties had to be of an age when they could make a valid contract, and if a girl was married when too young she could, when she came of age, repudiate the contract, subject to certain conditions If a woman was widowed she could remarry ; the obligatian on the family to find a husband for her was as great as the obligation to marry off unmarried girls.

But this was the law, the *shari'ah* Actual practice was based on the custom of the family, which was the custom of the community or the professional group to which the family belonged If

it was the custom not to educate girls, they would be taught just to read the Qur'an and to say their prayers. Child marriage was usual. Daughters were in theory entitled to inherit, that was never denied, but the legal subterfuge that a sister could, out of love for her brother, forego her claims, came to the help of custom wherever. Marriage remained a contract, but the woman could derive no advantage from this, as she would have to follow the custom of her family. Widow remarriage, far from being regarded as an obligation, was dreaded as something derogatory to the family, and to be avoided as far as possible. We have no records of wives divorcing their husbands. In the *Siyar al-Awliya* we are told that Shaikh Nizamuddin Awliya's sister did not get on well with her husband, and his mother discussed the question of getting a divorce for her. There may be stray references to such cases elsewhere also Divorces of wives by husbands are also seldom mentioned. But under the law a husband could divorce his wife, even without assigning any reason.

The 'free' woman was, however, protected in many ways. She did not cease to be a member of her own family because of marriage, and retained all the natural claims on the affection and support of her parents and brothers These in their turn took care to see that marriage did not take her away from them entirely, and so cousin marriage became quite common. A wife would have had great difficulty in obtaining a divorce, but she could threaten to leave her husband and return to live with her parents, and this would create a situation which she could utilise for her own benefit Polygamy was permitted by law, but the polygamist was usually looked down upon and ridiculed, unless he belonged to the ruling class which, so far as the observance of the *shari'ah* was concerned, had been written off as lost.

The greatest danger to the 'free' women and to family life itself arose from the appallingly large number of prostitutes. War, poverty, famine, ideas of caste, the institution of slavery and the licentiousness of the court and courtiers all contributed to this evil Except that she was ultimately the loser, the courtesan had

every advantage over the 'free' woman. She could move about freely, she was trained in the arts necessary for success in her profession and she had every opportunity to display her accomplishments. Muhammad Tughlaq assigned whole parts of the cities of Delhi and Daulatabad to courtesans to prevent them from speading all over. Mosques were built for them and by them and it seems the Sultan ordered them to say their prayers regularly. Akbar was deeply distressed by the prevalence of prostitution and tried to control it by forcing the unfortunates to live in an enclosed area with a single entrance, and by maintaining registers of visitors and of the residents of the area. But such attempts are of little significance beyond revealing the good intentions of those who made them. Some women were women because they were 'free', the rest were just members of a profession and not entitled to be thought about.

Slavery was another evil Islam did everything possible to eradicate slavery except forbidding it directly It was an act of merit to set free a slave; if that could not be done, the slave was to be treated as a member of the family, if a slave-girl had a child by her master, she became free automatically and her children were entitled to inherit The slave could arrange to buy his freedom; master and slave could participate in carrying on business and the earnings of the slave would belong to him. Slavery was not a stigma and a slave who had obtained his freedom could marry a 'free' woman A slave at the court, if he had the talent, could rise to the highest office, and even become the ruler But social forces operated against the maintenance of the position Islam had given to the slave, and far from being eradicated, slavery seems to have increased with the expansion of the Muslims. Syed Muhammad of Jaunpur declared that it was hard for anyone who had a slave or a slave-girl in the house to remain (firm) in the faith, and his followers must have avoided keeping slaves Akbar decreed very early in his reign that prisoners of war should not be sold as slaves, and possibly his own armies obeyed this rule But such measures would hardly touch the fringe of the problem of slavery.

Till the disintegration of the Mughal empire, the Muslim reformer or the reformist ruler could still have some hope of making the state an agency of reform. After 1800, the Indian Muslim community had to depend for reform on its own moral and intellectual resources This is the situation which prevails now. As a link between the two periods we have the personality and the teachings of Shah Waliullah of Delhi (1703-63). We have also the influence of the Wahhabi movement which, though technically revivalist and in many ways conservative aimed at clearing up the mess in which Muslim society found itself. Shah Waliullah was acutely conscious of the intellectual confusion and moral degeneration of the Muslims and the injustice and exploitation which characterised the political and social system of his day, but he does not seem to have had much hope of a change for the better without the support of political authority, and it is a painful disillusionment to find that he looked to a person like Ahmad Shah Abdali to serve the cause of revival and reform

That the Muslim community was not without moral resources is borne out by the life and work of Syed Ahmad Shahid and Shah Ismail Shahid in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century. They were active reformers. They attacked superstitious practices which had become deep-rooted among the Muslims They preached the message of human equality to Muslim society which had become divided into an exploiting and an exploited class and had so far forgotten the basic principle of Islamic democracy that in some places Syed Ahmad Shahid visited he found Muslims unwilling to sit and eat together because of difference of status. Syed Ahmad Shahid insisted on widows being given their full rights. He appealed to the Qur'an to enable widows to get their rights and here he was on such sure ground that no objection could be made by any theologian or any Muslim who recognised the injunctions of the Qur'an as binding. Syed Ahmad Shahid practised what he preached. He himself married a widow and made it obligatory on all his unmarried followers to

marry widows. But in spite of the powerful impact made by his personality, Syed Ahmad Shahid could not disentangle himself from the idea of a political agency or a state being necessary for the moral and social reconstruction of Muslim life, and wasted his energy and lost his life trying to create a Muslim state on the North-West Frontier.

Syed Ahmad Shahid's activities centred in what is now Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. In Bengal we find about the same time the emergence of the Faraizi movement This was primarily a movement for religious reform, but because of its opposition to exploitation it also worked for the establishment of a political nucleus. The Wahhabi movement, though dogmatic, revivalist and in some ways unreasonably conservative, is essentially known for its anti-British character.

The events of 1857-58 convinced a section of the Muslims that there was no hope of political freedom for the time being, and the only course which a good Muslim could follow was to turn his back on the political situation as well as on the methods of education which the British government had introduced. In the late 19th and early 20th century, the theological seminary of Deoband, which had been founded in 1867, became a spearhead of opposition to the British government and one should not judge its religious character without taking this fact into consideration. But while determined to achieve freedom by all means, the seminary of Deoband worked for a kind of stagnation of the spirit by reaffirming traditional beliefs even to the extent of denying such scientific facts as the movement of planets round the sun. It became, therefore, a stronghold of conservatism and brought the Muslims who were inclined to accept the existing conditions or saw no other alternative to acceptance into open conflict.

II

To understand the working of the Muslim mind during the last hundred years in the context of social reform, we have to remind ourselves of the two fundamental principles that have been

enunciated a countless number of times since the twelfth century and are repeated with equal confidence and vehemence even now, first, that the Muslim *shari'ah* is all comprehending and perfect and secondly, that no authority is empowered to make changes in the *shari'ah*. To challenge either principle is to make the Muslim close his mind to further discussion. But the situation is not as unpromising as appears from this statement. The Muslim can be asked what he means precisely by the *shari'ah*. Is it the Qur'an, the revealed book? Is it the Qur'an plus the exposition of its teachings by the Prophet, the example of correct belief and practice which he placed before the Muslims, which is called the *sunnah*? Would we include in the *shari'ah* also the sayings attributed to the Prophet, collectively called the Hadith, the Traditions Or, finally, would we depend on the works of jurisprudence for a full knowledge of the *shari'ah*?

Sir Syed Ahmed Khan (1817-1888) raised all these questions. He was a man of great intellectual courage, indefatigable when he set his heart on doing something and possessed of remarkable scholarly acumen. He was very sensitive in matters of religious prestige, and spent years collecting material to refute the allegations made in Sir William Muir's life of the Prophet. His deep concern for the Muslims made him take up the study of theology and aspire to create a religious as well as a secular urge among the Muslims to build up their life again after the catastrophe of 1857-58. He was a believing, even if not a very pious Muslim, and he is perhaps the first example in Indian Muslim history of a man who wrote on theological subjects without any training of the traditional kind in theology and without claiming any of the concessions made by public opinion to mystics and poets.

Sir Syed Ahmad Khan started from the premise that nothing in Islamic belief and practice could be opposed to reason. Angels mentioned in the Qur'an could not possibly be what they have been assumed to be; human reason cannot accept the existence of such creatures They were, therefore, not beings but symbols used for the different powers of nature. Sir Syed challenged the

authenticity of each and every statement believed to have been made by the Prophet and collected in the form of Traditions. He was, technically, on sure ground, because no reporter of anything said by the Prophet claimed to have repeated the exact words used by him. All the Traditions could, therefore, be examined in the light of reason, and what appeared to be against reason could be dismissed as apocryphal. If the Traditions were not binding, the works of jurisprudence based on these Traditions could, naturally, possess no authority at all. The question of *taqlid*, or following a particular school of jurisprudence, did not arise, the door of a fresh interpretation, or *ijtihad*, as it was called, could not be regarded as closed and the orthodox were far exceeding their rights in demanding that a Muslim should not think for himself

Sir Syed's aim was to persuade Muslims to acquire Western knowledge through education in the institutions that were being set up, as otherwise they would deprive themselves of the means of survival. He wrote a book challenging the allegations of Hunter's work, *The Indian Mussalmans*, and showed that they were loyal to the Queen. He tried to impress upon Indian Muslims the need for progress, for adopting a way of life that would enable them to meet the British on equal terms. The '*ulama* and the conservative Muslims dubbed him a nature-worshipper, and 'natury' became an Urdu word. Sir Syed later abandoned his theological position and his attempt at changing the basis and direction of Muslim thought through a new interpretation of Islam in order to get the community's approval and support for his educational venture, the Muhammadan Anglo-Oriental School, which soon became a College and, in 1920, the Aligarh Muslim University. The bargain was symbolised by the adoption at Aligarh of the traditional course in theology. But the Muslim could not live at one and the same time in a medieval concept of Islam and a modern concept of knowledge. As a result, his religious sentiments found no proper direction and the modern knowledge he acquired did not take deep root. But Sir Syed succeeded in creating a dissatisfaction with the traditional way of life, specially

in the matter of dress and food and table manners In one of his essays, he quotes from the diary of an English lady who had been invited to a dinner in the palace of Khedive Ismail of Egypt and was absolutely disgusted at seeing the ladies eat with their hands. Sir Syed justifies this English lady's disgust. Civilised people use forks and knives, and Muslims would continue to be regarded as crude unless they adopted the civilised way of eating. His opponents went to the other extreme and declared the use of forks and knives to be forbidden by Islam

In another essay, Sir Syed has pointed out that while Islam has given equal status in law and religion to men and women, the position of Muslim women in fact is miserable. On the other hand, in the civilised countries of the West—and Sir Syed was thinking in particular of England—while the legal and religious status of women is lower, their social status is very high and men treat them with the greatest courtesy and consideration. Muslims should, therefore, live up to the standard set by Islam and give women in law as well as fact the status accorded to them by Islam Naturally, he thought women's education necessary, but he gave much less thought to this than to the education of men.

The upper class Muslims of what is now Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and the old province of the Punjab have done their best to make it appear that they were *the* Muslims, and their ideas and interests were the ideas and interests of the whole Muslim community. One could include among these upper class Muslims the sprinkling of the old aristocratic families in pre-Partition Bengal, Madras and Bombay. So Sir Syed's efforts to induce Muslims to accept English education have been given far more importance than they deserved As a matter of history, Maulvi Abdul Karim of Bengal did much more, and elsewhere also the number of Muslims who took to English education was considerable. Sir Syed went too far in identifying progress with the adoption of English dress and manners. Such adoption could only be a poor imitation, and it not only alienated the orthodox but also roused the fears and suspicions of the conservatives. The poet Akbar of Allahabad

expressed these fears and suspicions in delightful satire. To be modern and progressive in Sir Syed's style would lead to a contempt for all faith:

Friends have reported to the police,
so violent is their rage
That Akbar dares to mention God in
our enlightened age.

The passion to be modern would undermine family life.

To the civilised, home is a curse
They live all their life in hotels
And die in the arms of a nurse.

And, of course, not finding many Muslim girls modern enough, the civilised young Muslims would have no choice but to run after Anglo-Indain girls and make themselves ridiculous by expressing their sentiments in the traditional oriental fashion:

She saw my eyes bedewed and gave her
curls a shake—
'I see,' tis the Canal Department,
my mistake.'

But Akbar was distressfully aware of the inability of the orthodox to rise to the situation. They were apologetic, abject, ready to make a bargain to save their face:

And you can wear these socks and shoes
And be enamoured of Miss D'Souz',
If only you fast and pray
You can live and love as you choose.

It is a moot point what would have happened if English education had not been publicised with such fanfare, and those who constituted themselves the representatives of the Muslim community had not staked any claims on the ground of being modern and anglicised or at least more modern and anglicised than the Hindus. But about two consequences of what was actually done to encourage English education in Sir Syed's style there can be no doubt. Emphasis on the needs of the upper class Muslims led to

an almost total neglect of the lower classes, particularly the artisans. Secondly, the adoption of English ways—or fashions—by the women of the upper classes, both Muslim and non-Muslim, frightened the conservative Muslim parents and retarded the spread of education among girls.

There was one question which the parents of the artisan class and of the girls in general asked : 'What will education lead to ?' There could be, no doubt, satisfying theoretical answers to this question, but people, even reasonable people, cannot act on theory alone The artisan saw that if his son learnt English he would try to become a 'sahib' ; he would despise his ancestral profession, cut himself off from his family, and get in return only some minor government job. Even if he succeeded he would be lost to the family and the professional community. The upper class was unwilling to make any concession to economic needs or advantages by promoting education for professions that were considered beneath its traditional dignity. The results of this insistence on suitable jobs are a matter of political history. Its social results are apparent in the continuing alienation of the artisan class. It has not accepted English education or any education, and there are no contacts between it and the upper class Muslims such as would promote genuine integration of the community.

The parents of girls who wanted to know what English education would lead to also never got a satisfying answer. Their motives in asking must, however, also be considered, if we wish to understand the situation fully What are the duties, the functions, of women in society ? The conservative Muslim parent of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century would reply that a girl of good family must be brought up and educated to be a good wife and mother For this a certain amount of restraint, self-denial, even hardship may be necessary. Inevitably, the parent would add that if education led to girls making demands for themselves, and these demands included not only ornaments and clothes, but entertainment and the excitements of free movement and mixed society, the ideal of being a good wife and mother

would necessarily be set aside and family life would be undermined. If one did not want one's daughter to be modern and 'fashionable', what was the point in sending her to school and college? The prevalence of cousin marriage and general distaste for the idea of a girl acquiring accomplishments as a qualification for a better husband than she was likely to get otherwise put the parents in a fairly strong position. The question of education got mixed up with the question of 'pardah' or seclusion of women, and the discussion got more complicated

There are still Indian Muslims who defend the seclusion of women with religious fervour and regard it as identical with the Islamic way of life. They are convinced that if this is given up all decency will vanish. These fanatics cannot be safely ignored, but it is not only fanatics who have defended seclusion. Mirza Abu Talib, who was in England in the first years of the nineteenth century and was quite a popular figure in the high society of London was challenged by an English lady to prove the social value of the seclusion of women, and he produced a pamphlet which was published and fairly widely circulated. Some forty years later, Lutfullah, another Indian Muslim visitor to London, who was also a favourite with the ladies, wrote an account of his travels, and though he appears to have enjoyed mixed society, he thought the seclusion of women was a better system. In the early years of this century, when a controversy was raging over the question, Maulvi Nazir Ahmed, writing as a theologian, agreed that seclusion as practised in India was not enjoined by Islam. It was only a social custom, but a custom it was necessary to preserve. The opponents of this custom, who were quite articulate, argued that because it was a custom and not a clear religious injunction, it could be given up. It should be given up, because of its disastrous effects on health and because it reduced the social effectiveness of at least half the members of the Muslim community.

However, it was not reasoning, but the pressure of political and economic circumstances that brought about a change. Muslim

girls began to be sent to schools in increasing numbers because young men preferred educated wives, and the conduct of these wives did not justify the fears of their becoming too fashionable and running wild. Some reformers, like Maulvi Karamat Hussain at Lucknow and Shaikh Abdullah at Aligarh made the promotion of women's education their life's ambition. But they concentrated on this point, and did not attack the institution of pardah, which was concession for which conservative parents were thankful. The impulse to give up seclusion came from the Tripolitan wars of 1910, the Balkan wars, the Khilafat movement and, finally, the Muslim League. It was clear that the stay-at-home women would be able to do just nothing for the honour and survival of their community and it would be shameful if they did nothing What began almost as a war-time measure established itself as a precedent. The observance of pardah is not so much a matter of religion now as of a habit which is quite often followed by the women themselves as a matter of preference. But the number of such women is still considerable The Muslim women seen wearing the burqah in the largest cities of India indicates that in the smaller cities seclusion of this kind, pardah in terms of extra covering, would still be the general rule. But from being the custom of a whole community it has become the custom of families and localities. How long it will continue in this form it is difficult to predict. All families which do not object to or do not find a way of evading education altogether no longer oppose the education of girls, and this education, even if not very purposeful in itself, will probably be the main liberating influence.

In the matter of the personal rights of women circumstances brought about a change for which the conservative elements of the Muslim community could find no means of resistance. The British administration established its own courts of justice, and the only way to settle disputes was to bring them before these courts. The sanctity of Muslim religious law was gone. These courts would consider and decide matters according to their own standards of law and justice. They followed custom and not the

written law where custom differed from the law. If custom denied the right of inheritance to daughters, they could not inherit by appealing for a decision according to the *shari'ah*, although the *shari'ah*, itself declared that any custom opposed to it had no validity. It was only as late as 1937 that the Central Legislative Assembly passed a law enabling a Muslim who filed a declaration to that effect before the prescribed authority to have the *shari'ah* or Muslim Personal Law made applicable to him in the courts, in disregard of judgements and precedents according to which custom had superseded the *shari'ah*.

Towards the close of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, it was found that Muslim women were becoming Christians in order to obtain divorce from their husbands. Apostasy is one of the serious offences under the *shari'ah*, but apostates can be punished only in a Muslim state if the state has made apostasy punishable. Under British rule change of faith was not an offence, nevertheless the courts enforced the rule of the *shari'ah* that if either party to a marriage contract apostatised, the contract was automatically dissolved. Muslim sentiment was deeply perturbed over this development Any Muslim wife who wanted to get rid of her husband could do so by becoming a Christian, and she would have no reason to feel afraid of any consequences because she would be protected by the Christian church and also by the government. On the other hand, the Sunni Hanafi Law, which was the form of the *shari'ah* followed in India was, in the matter of divorce, obviously and grossly unjust to the wife. She could be divorced, definitely and finally, by the husband saying 'I divorce you' three times, while the husband had many means at hand to prevent her divorcing him, and public opinion was strongly opposed to the wife taking the initiative in the matter of divorce. The number of marriages dissolved through change of religion may not have been large, but even one instance should have served as an eye-opener. The Muslims, however, did nothing about it. There is no recognised agency or authority for making changes in the *shari'ah*, and it was feared that the Muslim

community would lose its religious and cultural identity if the state was allowed to make laws superseding the laws of the *shari'ah* Ultimately, in 1939, through the efforts of Muhammad Ahmed Kazami, advantage was taken of a permissive provision in some of the Sunni Hanafi law-books that the rules of any other of the four orthodox schools could be applied, if necessary, in matters relating to divorce, and an Act known as the Dissolution of the Muslim Marriages Act was passed by the Central Legislative Assembly The statement of its objects and reasons is illuminating:

'There is no provision in the Hanafi Code of Muslim Law enabling a married Muslim woman to obtain a decree from the Courts dissolving her marriage in case the husband neglects to maintain her, makes her life miserable by deserting or persistantly maltreating her or under certain other circumstances The absence of such a provision has entailed unspeakable misery to innumerable Muslim women in British India. The Hanafi jurists, however, have clearly laid down that in cases in which the application of Hanafi law causes hardship, it is permissible to apply the provisions of the Maliki, Shafi'i or Hambali Law Acting on this principle, the '*Ulemas* have issued *fatwas* to the effect that in cases enumerated in clause 3, Part A of this Bill, a married Muslim woman may obtain a decree dissolving her marriage A lucid exposition of this principle can be found in the book called *Heelat-un-Najeza*, published by Maulana Ashraf Ali Sahib who has made an exhaustive study of the provisions of Maliki law which, under the circumstances prevailing in India may be applied to such cases. This has been approved by a large number of '*Ulemas* who put their seals of approval on the book.

'As the Courts are sure to hesitate to apply the Maliki law to the case of a Muslim woman, legislation recognizing and enforcing the above-mentioned principle is called for in order to relieve the sufferings of countless Muslim women.'[1]

Two points in regard to the Shariat Act and the Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act deserve notice The first is that the

initiative in both cases came from the Muslim community, and the second that the *shari'ah* was not changed but in a way reaffirmed. On the other hand, we have two examples of a sharp adverse reaction among Muslims to proposals for social reform through legislation. They insisted on being excluded from the operation of the Sarda Bill when it was in the stage of public discussion. The reasons for this, from the standpoint of reason, were lamentable. The marriage of minors was and still is prevalent among Muslims, and not only in the lower, uneducated classes. There was a case in Lucknow of a Chief Court Judge stating in his evidence before the Sarda Committee that child marriage was not practised among Muslims, and marrying off his minor grand-daughter shortly afterwards Maulana Muhammad Ali's articles opposing the Sarda Committee's proposals were, for a Muslim, the most disgraceful form of pleading When the proposals that finally took the shape of the Hindu Code Bill were being discussed, and the inclusion of Muslims was suggested, Muslim reaction was equally sharp. In 1963, when the idea of a uniform code of personal law was mooted, the Muslims again reacted violently. Any suggestion that his can be *shari'ah* improved upon by modern social reformers and legislators is sure to provoke the Muslim. He seems to be unshakable in his conviction that the *shari'ah* is explicit and perfect If in some matter he is obliged to retreat from this point, he will have to be assured that any action taken is in the interests of the *shari'ah* itself and will help to consolidate its position, otherwise he will oppose it, without realising that as a believer in a basically rational religion, he must be reasonable

It is known as a historical fact that a large part of the *shari'ah* laws, and not only the less significant, has been inoperative. This does not, technically, weaken the Muslim's position. He says that if the *shari'ah* has been inoperative the fault lies with the Muslims and not the *shari'ah*. An objective study of the *shari'ah*, which would inevitably show that on almost every important point, apart from the basic doctrines of Islam, the learned whose

opinions constitute the *sharī'ah* were at variance among themselves would force the Muslim to realise that he cannot evade the duty of thinking for himself and that the identification of the social practices of his own part of the Muslim world community with the *sharī'ah* of Islam is not a tenable position. There has already been considerable discussion on this point, specially on the question of the rights of women and the legality of taking interest on money deposited in banks or invested in government securities and commercial enterprises. But there should be more of it, with a proper spirit of objectivity, sympathy and reverence. And the lead should be taken by Muslim scholars not committed to any theological opinion or system.

But what if the Muslims refuse to take any action in matters where their inactivity adversely affects the welfare of the people as a whole? For instance, what is to be done if the marriage of minor girls continues? Can we wait till there are enough active Muslim social reformers who will convince their community that legislation to prevent the marriage of minors is necessary, and who will then see that necessary legislative action is taken and the law made is also enforced? Any action taken by the state to create and support such a body of reformers would make the body itself suspect and undermine its work, but there is still much that the state could do if it were itself deeply concerned and realised the need for tact. For instance, if a girl under 15 is married by the father or the grandfather she has the right under the *sharī'ah* law to repudiate the marriage when she has attained the age of 18, provided that the marriage has not been consummated. Does not this give the municipal authorities which register marriages and the courts the right to interfere in the interest of the minor girls? Would it be giving undue privilege to a particular minority if it was seen to that Muslim judicial officers should be available to decide cases where the marital rights and duties of Muslim women were involved? The marriage of minors is directly related to family planning and the health of children, and the state would be serving its own interests if it made the

marriage of minors a headache for the parents or guardian instead of the convenience it appears to be now.

There was no protest by the Muslims against the law prohibiting bigamous marriages by government servants, although it is a clear limitation of a right, even if conditional, given to Muslims by the *shari'ah*. This prohibition could be extended to include all institutions and agencies aided by the government, and it is not beyond the resourcefulness of our government with the legal acumen at its disposal to discover other indirect ways of implementing measures which it considers socially necessary. What is needed is tact, patience and perseverance Things that have to be done at the end of a process should not be attempted at the beginning. A uniform code for the whole of India is a good idea, but the necessary integration of the different communities should be achieved first through judicial decisions and practical government measures We cannot at one and the same time proudly proclaim the diversity of our cultural life and propose a uniform personal law for all citizens It has also to be remembered that laws should be made when they are needed and not only for theoretical satisfaction The protest of the Muslims in 1962-63, when it appeared—perhaps without sufficient cause—that a uniform legal code was being contemplated by the government is understandable, because there was no obvious and impelling reason that this should be done. And about the most tactless thing that could be said in this context was that Parliament was supreme and could make any laws it chose

It is generally admitted by all thoughtful Muslims that their community is deplorably indifferent to its welfare and far too half-hearted in its action against members who obstruct constructive policies. There are enormous funds in the control of large and small trusts that are not utilised at all or wasted or misused because of the trustees The letter of trust deeds is given far too much importance in relation to the spirit, and the trust deed becomes an instrument for the negation of the spirit in which it

was drawn up. Now that a Central Waqf Board has been formed, its administrative procedures appear to be encumbered with formalities that delay action quite unreasonably. Large amounts are still given away by Muslims as *zakat*, (an obligatory tax of about 2½% on specified kinds of property which a Muslim has had in his possession for a year) which was intended to provide funds for social welfare But here again a narrow interpretation of the aims prevents *zakat* from being utilised for constructive purposes, and most of it goes to those who have made begging for it a profession or to orphanages and similar institutions about whose administration the donors are generally ignorant. It would be easy to establish local organisations for the collection and genuinely beneficent utilisation of *zakat*. That would be more in accordance with the letter and the spirit of law than the present practice. Again, the prohibition of usury is regarded as covering every type of interest, and moneyed men will not agree to hand over the interest on fixed deposits and other investments for utilisation for social and constructive purposes

Unfortunately, an institution like the Delhi School of Social Work cannot be invited to take up the function of training Muslim social workers as a special project. The Muslims will not listen in matters of the *shari'ah* to anyone who is not himself learned in the *shari'ah*, and those who in our times qualify in such learning are astonishingly ignorant otherwise. The learned have also, throughout Muslim history, had the nasty habit of contradicting each other, and no decision can be taken unless there is a consensus. During the last hundred years or so, the popularity of apologetics also has prevented the Muslims from thinking clearly and objectively about their social problems. The Muslim world, Islam and the Muslim way of life have been the objects of attack from the West The Western scholar who studied Islam and Muslim institutions was taken to be—which in some cases he was—a weapon of the attacking forces Since attack is the best form of defence according to the orthodox theory of warfare, the Muslims attacked Western civilisation, or showed that Western

civilisation had many exposed and indefensible points. This was regarded as proving the superiority of the Muslim *shari'ah* in every respect. In practice, the Muslims adopted everything they could of the products of Western civilisation The inconsistency between condemning Western civilisation in principle and accepting it in practice was noted but ignored This had the unhealthy effect of drawing away attention from the problem of giving the Muslim *shari'ah* a contemporary expression more in accordance with its own spirit than the law-books compiled in an entirely different environment, in other words, of distinguishing between the historical and the ethical elements in its composition, and making the ethical elements the inspiration for a new way of life. It would not mean turning away from the *shari'ah* on the contrary, it would be a genuine return to the *shari'ah*, which has been the aspiration of Muslims throughout their history When the Indian Muslims will return to the *shari'ah* in the new spirit cannot be predicted. One is reminded here of the obvious truth of the Quranic verse . God does not change the condition of a people unless they change it themselves

REFERENCE

1 A A A Fyzee, *Outlines of Muhammadan Law*, pp 161–62.

VILLAGES IN MEDIEVAL INDIA

AN ASPECT OF Indian history which is generally ignored is the struggle of civilisation against forest, waste land, distance, isolation. It was the struggle of rulers to rule effectively, of cities to maintain commercial intercourse, of men to travel in safety and comfort, of culture to expand There were many turns of fortune in this struggle, and for those who are unable to identify the opposing forces, there is ample opportunity to be romantic. Of course, the realistic attitude I propose to adopt may itself have no basis in history, but it has enabled me to trace a continuity in Indian life and to avoid certain inconsistencies which seem to sterilise our thinking now Perhaps a generation or so later people may find that what I must call reasonable conjecture now is true history, or the nearest approach to true history

We know of centres of production in the most ancient times where industries, based on the utilisation of locally available raw material, manufactured goods that were cherished in places far, far away In the course of thousands of years the trade-routes along which these goods were carried became more and more precisely demarcated. The technique of road-building is not more than two hundred years old, and what we call trade-routes were, to begin with, vague directions in which people came and went, and which gradually developed into more or less familiar tracks and pathways through forests. While cities were growing and commercial intercourse developing, the human race was also multiplying. Large tribes and groups of tribes migrated from Central Asia westwards and into India. If they did not capture political power,

they settled around the cities under the protection of the forests. Till about the fourteenth century, the process of migration continued, and along with a large number of big and small cities a rural population came into existence which was settled in villages, and which represented what we may call layers of different races. No village was large or self-sufficient or powerful enough to protect itself, and a kind of feudal relationship, based on the overlordship of the strongest rural chiefs was established. The rural chiefs were almost constantly at war, and no overlordship could be made enduring because of the perpetual changes of alliance and allegiance. The so-called middle age of Indian history begins with the preponderance of the rural chiefs, bearing the generic term of Rajputs, over the cities and the political system required to maintain commercial intercourse and urban civilisation. The whole country was studded with large and small forts, strongholds of rural chiefs who could, by making a hunting ground of the trade-routes, strangle commercial intercourse.

From the purely economic point of view, it may be said that the establishment of the Sultanate in the early 13th century tilted the balance in favour of the cities as against the rural areas. There were attempts to make the administration effective, to make the sultan not an overlord but the only lord to ensure safety of travel, to exact regular payment of revenue in cash or kind. The sultans thus came into conflict with the big and small rural chiefs, there was continuous warfare, which becomes intelligible only if we realise that a central authority was asserting itself against the rural chief—whatever his name or race or religion—who sat entrenched in a fort and could endanger a trade-route or hamper the work of the administration.

In this context, there appear to be three categories of villages those that were so far away from cities and trade-routes that attempts to bring them under the administration would be difficult and uneconomic; those that lay along minor trade-routes and could be kept under control if the local administrator was vigilant and energetic enough; and those that lay along the major trade

routes or their tributaries, and whose produce was usually brought to the markets which supplied the cities.

We can say that the villages which lay beyond the range of the army and the administrator remained independent, and we can use what romantic adjectives we like to glorify that independence. The other side of this picture is that these villages were completely isolated from civilisation, sunk in superstition and dominated by tribal chiefs and a hierarchy of birth and caste. There is a charm in primitive life, an innocence which the civilised man, aware of his moral nature and struggling with his conscience feels inclined to envy. But for most of us the only road away from civilisation leads to ridiculous inconsistency or unashamed hypocrisy, and the historian and the sociologist should beware of bestowing praise on what they do not and should not admire.

This does not mean that the villages within the indirect and direct control of the administration were fortunate Villages under indirect control were either the property of rural chiefs or were assigned to some government officer or employee in lieu of salary. Some were also wholly or in part assigned as gifts for the maintenance of scholars and other deserving persons. Rural chiefs may, in their extortions, have thought of the future also; those who were given land for maintenance would generally not have been in a position to practise extortion Other assignees would seldom have had any scruples. The lot of the villages under the indirect control of the government was very hard indeed. But those under direct control must have been even worse off. Laws were made, no doubt, fixing the state's share of the produce, or of revenue when it was collected in cash, relief measures were undertaken when crops failed, but there really was nothing to check the greed and rapacity of the revenue collecting staff except the fear that they would be punished and made to disgorge their gains.

There are questions concerning the medieval Indian village which interest the economist and sociologist. What was the system of land-ownership, the method of cultivation, the means of

determining how the land-revenue demanded by the state was to be paid, how the village settled its disputes and managed its affairs, for what reason authority was believed to vest in the person or persons who exercised it, what loyalties or considerations of interest kept the village together as a community, if it was a community and not a collection of individuals or families? I think these matters are intimately connected with racial migrations, with race habits and those accidents which enabled one racial group to dominate the rest in particular areas. It would be unhistorical to look for a generally accepted system of land-ownership, and unrewarding to try to determine the nature of proprietary rights in land when such rights could be neutralised by a superior force, whether the rural chief or the state, which regarded the produce as being at its disposal. I imagine the village community as consisting of what may be bluntly called rulers and subjects, the subjects not being in a position to assert any rights. They would mainly do what they were asked to, and provide for their own subsistence by putting additional labour on land that was left to them after the best had been taken. I would hesitate to consider any *panchayat* or assembly as being in any way a democratic institution, because I suspect it would consist of members of the dominating families, and its decisions would be the self-assertion of a particular vested interest. Even today, those who do not cherish illusions would admit that, at least in north India, the village incorporates some vested interest which may be openly despotic or too elusive to be identified.

Altogether the history of the Indian village is a sad story of isolation, stagnation and systematic plunder enshrined as custom and administrative law.

MOSLEM INFLUENCE ON INDIAN ART

THE OLDEST KNOWN examples of art are the oldest expressions of belief; the creative artist was perhaps the first articulate human being. The oldest Indian representation of a deity, a figurine known to archaeologists as the 'dancing god of Harappa', is the statement of a view of life that has not changed basically for five thousand years. This figurine is imbued with a vital, dynamic quality, it suggests a movement that is at once rhythmic and powerful, and there is that spontaneous and complete identification of the artist with his work which expresses a belief that is inborn, that is the whole of man's nature and the whole of his universe.

Students of religion connect the dancing god of Harappa with the Hindu god, Siva. The relationship between the bulls on the amulets of the Indus Valley, the Rampurva bull and the Nandi bulls of later years is even more obvious. The presentations of the deity are necessarily abstract; but the animal world can be brought close to man in a concrete form, and help us to guess the quality and measure the depths of that feeling which bound man to the mysterious forces of nature that governed his life.

In course of time, religion acquired its own identity through metaphysical doctrines, rituals and ethics. Intellectually, man had associated himself with a group of concepts, he had realised the need to discriminate between his emotions and to discipline his nature. But the approach to metaphysics was something which the believers discovered for themselves. On the railings of Bharhut

and the gateways of Sanchi, story upon story and scene after scene was carved upon stone where the primeval attitude of oneness with all creation is depicted with an exhilarating spontaneity. There is no question here of a conception of sin or wrong, of sanctity and profanity, in fact of any divergence between moral command and natural urge. The wood nymph of the Sanchi gateway is a symbol of joy, an assertion, both innocent and intense of 'I am what I am'

The art which represents this view of life has been called naturalistic It reveals an inner awareness of nature, of the rhythm of cosmic movement, of the need to achieve harmony between symbol as compressed meaning and fact as the alphabet of expression. It could base itself ideally only on a doctrine of of the unity of all art. In a book that could be called the artist's scripture, the principle is laid down that he who wishes to understand the theory and practice of art must begin with music and song, then go on to dance and then to painting and sculpture. He will then realise the inner unity of all art, which leads to the realisation of the absolute within one's own living body. This unity of all art was supported by a technique, by a symbolism in which posture, arms, gestures, the expression of the face all contributed to the exposition of a metaphysical idea. 'The likeness of men became merged', as a writer said, 'into the presence of God.' The principle of unity of art had also a social significance, in that the craftsman, his patron and the public became magically one.

While this principle was taking shape, there were revolutions in the political and social world. In the third century B.C., the Emperor Ashoka imported Iranian stone-masons and patterns. The Indian environment and the Indian genius transformed the styles to suit its own ideal of perfection Some two centuries later, Greeks settled in the north-west of India introduced their own conceptions of art, and in their sculptures made the Buddha into a Greek god, if not Buddhism into a Greek religion. But in fact all that the Greeks achieved was the introduction of a new concept of proportion and symmetry and the general acceptance

of the idea that making images of the Buddha was also a form of worship. The craft of image-making established itself at Mathura and then at Sarnath. At Mathura was made the statue of the Buddha with transparent robes and sensuously moulded limbs, the grace of his form revealing the boundless grace of his spirit. At Mathura were also made female figures of a wondrous charm and lasciviousness, snaring other-worldly men with wicked smiles. They had to be made, and to be displayed in all sobriety, for was not the Buddha himself tempted, and is not temptation a part of the universal order ? At Amravati the question is stated with almost a deliberately cultivated frankness, heavy anklets and bangles tying the ethereal slenderness of limbs to the earth we know so well. The seated Buddha of Sarnath, delivering his sermon on the cause and cure of sorrow, is a vision of another world, the perfection of spirit embodied in perfection of form

We have, unfortunately, very few examples left of painting, which must have developed side by side with sculpture Prayer halls and living quarters for Buddhist monks began to be carved out of rock in the third century B C But the world, with its stories and its colours, invaded or was led into the monastery We have not much evidence of how it unfolded itself before the monks, apart from the frescoes of Ajanta and Bagh. But what we see of it passes understanding. Critics select a figure here and an episode there for discussion and comment, for the mind is staggered by the vastness of the panorama, the endless variety of experience, the exquisite beauty of every detail of form and feeling.

The ideal of unity within diversity and the plasticity of form found their consummation in temple architecture. However big the temple may have been, and the natural tendency was to make them more and more imposing, they symbolised the silence and the solitude of the cell where the individual soul could hold communion by itself with the world soul. We now look for other values For us the Kailash temple at Ellora, carved out of one piece of rock by four generations of reverent craftsmen, ranks as one of the

wonders of the world. At Konarak, in Orissa, standing by itself near the seashore, is the temple that represents the highwater-mark of design and sculpture, planned on a scale so magnificent as to have defied completion.

By the end of the fourteenth century, the naturalistic views of life and style of art had fulfilled themselves. Still, the formalism that the Muslims brought into India must be regarded as a revolution The Muslims had an entirely different view of life, of its significance and its meaning, an entirely different tradition of relationship with the divine They had a religious law consisting of commands and prohibitions, a doctrine of community life in which the individual was just a fragment, and a concept of God based on the rejection of all material symbols Image worship was condemned and representation of living things forbidden. Architecture, calligraphy and crafts were the only permitted means of satisfying the craving for beauty, but to these the Muslims added the arts, sinful perhaps but not past forgiveness, of music and painting and poetry They cultivated almost everything, in fact, except sculpture, which was too obvious a challenge to the iconoclast. When the Muslims came to India, they had acquired and given a distinct form to all the arts recognised by culture, except the presentation of the human form in wood or stone. They had evolved, besides, a philosophy of what they called Love, and developed a craving for the beautiful that could not be satisfied. They believed also in the assertion of the human personality, in majesty, in power, in domination over space and time.

The first Muslim work of art, the Qutub Minar, is a tower so named and so constructed as to present the typical Muslim values and aspirations. Its mass is cleverly concealed by variations in the surface of its several storeys, by calligraphic and floral bands across its tapering length, by balconies supported on clusters of miniature arches ; its slenderness creates an illusion of height, while the pyramidal distribution of weight gives it great stability. The arched screen of the mosque, of which the Qutub Minar formed a component, has not stood the test of time, but what

remains is fascinating in grace and beauty of proportions. The incriptions on the older arches constituting this screen are a unique mixture of Quranic verses and floral patterns, and create the feeling that the word of God is being whispered among leaves and flowers.

Beginning with the Qutub Minar, the Muslims experimented in architectural forms. The most characteristic structures were mosques and mausoleums. The mosque, as the house of prayer, represented the numbers, the strength, the aspirations, and the democratic character of the community as a congregation. The Atala mosque at Jaunpur and the Purana Qila mosque at Delhi are typical as symbols of strengh and stability, one expressing them in a primitive, the other in a refined and disciplined form. The mausoleum has a long history behind it. In Indian Muslim architecture it is not a reminder of death but the last and the most glorious message of life, for what else could be said of Humayun's Tomb, of Sikandra where Akber lies buried and of the Taj Mahal? Architecture collected around itself, with striking discrimination and tastefulness, the arts of calligraphy, of mosaic, of gardening. It explains to us the beauty and significance also of what is not there, of the craft of the jeweller, of the brass-worker, of the ivory carver, above all of the textile worker, whose patterns, simple or elaborate, belong to the world of the minaret and the dome, of channels and cascades, of birds and flowers. Like architecture, Indian Muslim or Mughal painting belongs to the category of formal art But the rich illuminated manuscripts, the birds of Ustad Mansoor, the portraits, some of them most exquisite, reveal an inner unity of culture, vibrant with an intense longing for beauty, a beauty out of which we are born and to which we return.

THE RED FORT

NOTHING LOOKS so dreary as a house that is not lived in but only visited. The dreariness of the palace that has become a monument—even a national monument—is in proportion to its erstwhile magnificence Still we admire palaces, for even as monuments they impress the mind, and enable some of us to exercise our imagination and see them as they once were. But the Red Fort is a challenge which the most imaginative would not venture to accept It has a moat and a high wall around it, but it is most unconvincing as a fort The buildings supposed to have been once inhabited leave us wondering how even kings and queens could have lived in them We have either to tell ourselves that it is all make-believe or to accuse the Mughals of having sacrificed comfort to a hard and showy elegance.

In fact, there would have been nothing to perplex us if the civil and military officers of the British Government had not been afraid of ghosts. In 1858, the Mughal Empire was dead and the last Mughal Emperor a prisoner There was no one even to haunt the Red Fort Still, it was thought necessary to convert it into a cantonment. It was only much later that the Fort was given the status of a monument, but only a small part of it, and that, too, overshadowed by ugly military barracks The other buildings were pulled down, the orchards removed, in order to make the place look like a proper cantonment Another reason for perplexity is that the Indian way of life has changed. We think, like the Europeans, that a house consists of rooms, and rooms are not rooms unless they have four walls Even the

verandah, which so far served as a relief from enclosed living, is fast disappearing. We now think in terms of permanent fixtures, isolation, privacy. The ghosts of earlier centuries would prefer to haunt their own prisons rather than live in our houses.

The age of the Emperor Shah Jahan, the builder of the Red Fort, was an age of refinement, in which what are called the minor arts attained their highest level of excellence. Shah Jahan was the wealthiest of the Mughal Emperors, and he could build as grandly as he liked He did not really need a palace, the one at Agra was commodious enough. But arhitecture seems to have been his principal means of self-expression and so he planned a new city at Delhi, to be named after him, Shahjahanabad, a new palace and a new mosque. But the royal palace was still only the hard core of the royal camp It did not eliminate improvised outdoor living, the tent of the nomad, the exquisite carpets hung and spread, the flow of water, the blaze of colour and the bloom of flowers The imperial palace was also the seat of the government Its privacy was not the privacy of the householder sheltering himself from prying eyes, but the dazzling publicity and the baffling mystery of power.

Shah Jahan had the gift of making the solid look immaterial, the strong appear delicate I said the Red Fort was most unconvincing as a fort That is because there is nothing grim and forbidding about it The walls and the moat could really protect, but the gateway of the Fort is more an invitation to loyal subjects to come and pay respects to their sovereign than a warning to actual or potential enemies. Those who entered the gate and passed the scrutiny of the chamberlains would proceed through the attendants' quarters to the Naubat Khana, where the time of the day or night was indicated by the music played If a public audience was being held, they would be taken between serried ranks of soldiers to the Diwan-i-Am, the Hall of Public Audience. This is a pillared hall, its roof supported on broad, graceful arches whose proportions have a striking harmony. Here the

Emperor sat on a balcony, the entrance to which is from the back, from the interior of the palace. Below the balcony stood the Vizier, on a pedestial high enough for him to hand over and receive documents from the Emperor. On both sides of the royal balcony the nobles stood with folded arms, in strict accordance with their rank, and they stood stiff, silent and motionless till the audience was over

This audience was really the second audience of the day. The first or informal audience, called the *darshan*, was about the time of the sunrise. The Emperor appeared on a balcony at the back of palace, towards the river. Anyone who wanted could come and have a look at him, and some families in Delhi made it a tradition not to have breakfast before they had seen the Emperor. But those who had complaints or requests to make also came at this time, and they had the opportunity of presenting their papers directly. These were communicated to the officer concerned at the Public Audience on one of the days following It was a most serious event if the Emperor did not appear for the *darshan*, and usually people began to fear for peace and security and to pray for the Emperor's life.

The Public Audience was generally followed by another consultation, the most important of the day. This was held in the Hammam, the royal Bath, after the Emperor had refreshed himself. The royal Bath has now a very plain exterior But inside, with the water-channel and the small fountain from which came a spray of scented water, it is almost the ideal place for the thoughtful mind. Subsequent generations associate with the Bath mysterious ways of heating the water and regulating its temperature as it flowed into the spacious pool, but even without this mystery one cannot but envy the luxury which the Emperor enjoyed of having so much water to himself

The part of the palace which was meant to overawe the mind with the imperial splendour was the Diwan-i-Khas, the Hall of Private Audience This was for the evening assemblies, when candles were lighted and the Emperor and his courtiers appeared

in full dress. This Hall is of marble, its ceiling is elaborately painted, and there is the presumptuous inscription that if Heaven is to be found anywhere on earth, it is here in this Hall. But architecturally this Hall seems gaudy and pretentious when compared with the simple elegance of the Diwan-i-Am In this Hall stood the Peacock Throne, a marvel of the jewellers' craft. It was taken away by Nadir Shah as part of his booty in 1739, and was too valuable to have remained intact. But judging from its descriptions and the pictures of what is left of it, it must have been a piece of artistic extravagance.

South of the Diwan-i-Khas there is a suite of rooms and a small hall In one of the rooms one can still see the furnishing. Were these carpets, these cushions and pillows, this bed, all that the Emperor had for himself? We hope not But if this room is an indication of destitution in the midst of wealth, even what is left of the ladies' quarters sickens us with its contrast of abundance and deprivation The Emperor had an abundance of ladies in the palace, the ladies having nothing except what the Emperor bestowed on them as a favour The Rang Mahal, the palace of Colour, must have been seething with humanity, filled with the noise almost of the country fair, and repellent to anyone not brought up in its atmosphere The two buildings of the ladies' part of the palace that we see now are survivals of what must have been a township of females. The situation was really much worse than appears at first sight, and makes the household of the simple honest citizen a haven of contentment and peace

Odd structures come up in every group of buildings that grows with time Aurangzeb put a jewel of a mosque right in the midst of the worldly pomp of the Red Fort, as if to show that he could have communion with God while all around him worshipped pomp and power The two pavilions, Sawan and Bhadon, Early Rain and Late Rain, with the water-channel and the pavilion in the lake between them were part of a large garden, the garden which has disappeared and in whose stead stand military barracks We can give our imagination free play in reconstructing the

architecture of the Red Fort, but the barracks remain where they are.

THE QUTUB COMPLEX AS A SOCIAL DOCUMENT

THE MEMOIRS AND Reports and Lists of Delhi Monuments published by the Archaeological Survey of India contain complete and detailed information about the groups of buildings which constitute the Qutub complex and other related material which is beyond the scope of this paper. My purpose here is not to reproduce all that information in an abbreviated form. I have had to study Indian architecture for a book I wrote some eighteen years ago on ancient Indian culture and now for lectures on Indian Muslim architecture. I am not a specialist in any sense. I can only present certain methods of approach that have occurred to me in the attempt to make architecture intelligible and interesting to myself and to my students, and I have selected the Qutub Complex as the subject of this paper because it is particularly useful for this purpose.

The study of my specimen of architecture consists, I feel, in reading the architect's mind to discover how he adopted techniques and selected material for the construction of the building, the purpose of which was known to him. In reading the architect's mind we are moved by the same sentiments, we participate, as it were, in the planning, in the choice of ways and means, in the execution of the plan and in the assessment of the completed work It may bring us no joy if we feel from the start that the architect was content to imitate or to follow a fashion, to use the prevalent techniques and the most easily available material, and to look forward to no appreciation beyond what is shown by the unimagi-

native for work which did not involve exercise of the imagination. We may, on the other hand, share the rapture of the artist who discovered the most perfect harmony between purpose and design, and find that the plan, the techniques, the material and the proportions of the created work reduce themselves to a single moment of exaltation. It is this experience which assures us that the beauty of architecture is the beauty of poetry, music, painting and sculpture, and the great artist can enable us to overcome our imperfections and realise the underlying unity of all art.

Unfortunately, we tend to impose many limitations on ourselves. In Indian architecture, for instance, we consider first the categorisation—is the building Hindu or Muslim ? Then we look at the size, the costliness of the material, the names and dates of the builder and the building We also overlook certain basic facts of the history of architecture The technique of corbelling, that is, projecting stones or bricks of the upper layer over the lower so as to make an arch or a ceiling, and the use of the beam and post, or the trabeate system, are much older and more universal than Hinduism , the use of the arch and dome, or the arcuate system, was developed by the Romans and is much older than Islam, but we have labelled one system Hindu and the other Muslim. We look everywhere for borrowed elements. I do not mean that there are no differences between Hindu and Muslim architecture or that they should be ignored. The temple and the mosque represent two different concepts of worship, and cannot, therefore, be built in the same way. But if we begin, as we should, by understanding the purpose of the structure and then attempt to read the architect's mind, we shall appreciate the beauty of the created work without being misled by irrelevant considerations

What we have to remember, I think, when studying Indian monuments, is the difference between architecture and sculpture. While trying to explain this difference to my class, a definition of both these arts occurred to me, which my artist friends have since assured me is fairly apt and comprehensive Architecture is creation with material , sculpture is creation out of material The

canvas of the architect is space ; in space he creates a form by putting together whatever material he builds with The canvas of the sculptor is the material itself, out of which he makes a particular form emerge A very small building can be a specimen of architecture , a very large building, or even a complex of buildings can be an example of sculpture. Not only the Kailash Temple of Ellora, which was in fact sculptured, but many other temples have been deliberately given an outline which creates the impression that they were not built with but hewn out of stone, and are sculptures on a gigantic scale. Between the definitely architectural and the definitely sculptural we can have variations of approach. The architecture of Gujarat is generally characterised by a sculptural approach, though there are also buildings, like the Jame' Masjid of Sarkhej, where the influence of sculptural standards is completely absent We could say that up to a certain time in Indian history the aesthetics of sculpture dominated architecture. During Muslim rule sculpture may not have been patronised to any appreciable extent, but the stone-masons and sculptors certainly did not give up their profession, and they took their time to accept the aesthetics of architecture. It would be fairer and more precise not to make distinctions on the ground of religion when the real difference lies in the degree to which the standards and aesthetic principles of sculpture and architecture have been applied in the planning, the construction and the ornamentation of a building. If we bear this in mind, a study of the Qutub complex becomes an exciting intellectual and aesthetic adventure, and gives history another perspective.

I cannot here dilate upon the purely archaeological problems. We know that the Quwwat-al-Islam mosque grew with the Muslim population of Delhi As constructed originally, in 1199, it would not have accommodated more than 2000 persons. Its final extension by Alauddin would have made it sufficient for ten or fifteen times that number, if not more These extensions have been traced out without much difficulty by archaeologists, and fairly reasonable and convincing reconstructions have been made to show what the

mosque looked like after its first extension by Iltutmish and second extension by Alauddin. Here I propose to consider only what is still standing, and can be seen and judged by those who do not have the imagination and the training of the archaeologist.

The Turks who occupied Delhi came from an area in which both brick and stone were used in building, but architecture in brick, such as we see in the oldest monuments of Bukhara, would have set the standard. Along with brick structures, the art of making tiles had been developed and was making continuous progress, both aesthetically and technically On the other hand, sculpture and stone-masonry practised in the Greek colonies of Bacteria and Gedrosia would not have died out. Thanks to Alauddin Jahansoz, we cannot now say whether Ghazni was mainly a city of brick or of stone or of wooden structures. But we may be certain that those who thought of building a mosque and a *minar* at Delhi were thinking in terms of architecture and not sculpture Construction in wood was ruled out , bricks were not available , they could only build in stone

There is an inscription above the northern entrance to the Quwwat-al-Islam mosque stating that the material of 27 temples was utilised for its construction. If this was done after the people of Delhi had submitted, it was certainly against the *shari'ah*, but there would hardly have been any among the Turks occupying Delhi whose conscience would have troubled them on that account We must, however, unequivocally condemn the action. Some of the temples would no doubt have been damaged and desecrated during the fighting, and they would have been abandoned for that reason. But the inscription indicates that these temples were deliberately dismantled, and it was not only a matter of utilising the material of temples destroyed as an act of war.

While the moral and legal issue is clear, however, the question of who carried out the dismantling has still to be answered. We can assume that Hindu stone-masons were forced to do it, or that Muslim masons were employed. In any case the work was done by stone-masons. If they had been Muslims brought over from the

Punjab or beyond they would have known the technique of building true arches and we would have had corbelled arches in the screen of the Quwwat-al-Islam mosque. As it is, the true arch appears for the first time in the Alai Darwaza, built in 1311. We must assume, therefore, that the stone-masons were Hindus. And not only in this first instance. It appears from an inscription on the 5th storey of the Qutub Minar that the repairs and additions in the reign of Firoz Tughlaq in 1368 were carried out under the supervision of a master-mason named Nana Salba, son of Chahada Dev Tala

The stone-masons employed for dismantling the temples and building the mosque would not all have been residents of Delhi. The city was not large enough to provide continuous employment for any considerable number of stone-masons, unless we assume that a good proportion of the 27 temples mentioned was in the process of construction. Family group or communities of stone-masons and sculptors generally migrated from one place of work to another, remaining settled for as long as was necessary to complete a particular project. Many such families and groups would have been collected in haste from near and far, for the mosque had to be built soon and the Minar was to follow

What would have been the attitude of these stone-masons and sculptors to what they were asked to do ? Would they have undertaken it for fear of losing their lives, with hatred seething within them ? That would be the logical deduction, considering what had happened. But, then, would not their feelings have affected their work ? Cunningham has pointed out some technical defects in the construction of one or two corbelled ceilings and their supports in the southwestern corner of the mosque colonnade, and attributed them to haste. But the later extensions have not stood the test of time as well as the original mosque, and instead of any evidence of slipshod work we find unimpeachable examples of free, creative effort. The stone-masons were not submissive instruments. They must have asserted themselves as technicians, and also exercised their imagination to appreciate and their skill to

realise in practice the architectural values they were asked to express.

There are many mosques in India with colonnades around their courtyards, but none in which the eastern side has been so definitely emphasised. The gateway built by Iltutmish and the Alai Darwaza are on the southern side, because the city lay to the south. But the main gateway of the original mosque, like the entrance to a temple, is on the east, and the columns on this side are four deep, while those on the north and south are only three deep. Does not this imply that the stone-masons, or their chief, feeling instinctively that the eastern colonnade must represent the vestibule of a temple, insisted that this should be emphasised, and had his way ? The screen, which stands opposite, was probably the central feature, following a prevalent style in mosque construction which was further developed in different parts of India. It must have been higher than the domes of the covered area behind it. What remains of the screen now is the central arch and three of the four low arches which flanked it, two on each side. Originally, one would have looked through the central arch into a shadowy interior, and felt that passing through it one would enter the world of the spirit, of calm and quiet contemplation of the divine. Now one looks through it into space and feels that in isolation and decay its beauty has acquired another and far richer meaning. I remember taking the Russian artist Magda Nachmann to the Qutub over twenty years ago. Once she had seen this arch she would look at nothing else. She stood before it in rapturous silence and wept when it became dark and we had to return. And indeed, if we look at the arch and take in its beauty, we feel that it is something that can be translated into many forms and many moods, into the peace and tranquillity of the Buddha image, into the timeless contemplation of the Trimurti of the Elephanta Caves, the ecstasy of the *sufi*, the poet's dream of a loveliness that eludes the drapery of woods. It is something beyond architecture and beyond sculpture, a chiselling out of space that creates the framework for endless horizons of thought and feeling.

I referred earlier to reading the architect's mind in order to understand his work. Archaeologists have found inscribed, on a pillar of one of the arches of the screen, and again near the entrance to the Minar, the name of Fazl-bin-abi'l-Maali as superintendent of the works. He may have been an Arab or an Iranian or a Turk. He may have been a genius in the art of communication as well as of architecture, able to design beautiful and impressive monuments and to explain to masons who did not know his language how to build what he had designed. But if he were a Muslim from outside India, would he have designed corbelled arches, knowing that they could stand much less weight than true arches ? We can be sure that he would not. It must have been the Hindu masons who insisted on building according to their traditional techniques, disclaiming all responsibility for the stability of the structure if any other technique was followed. And when this had been agreed to, they must have made their own calculations of the width and height and the massiveness of the supporting piers. This explains the exquisite proportions of the central arch, its quality of being eloquent and alive, its rising upward with a moving, natural grace, the two sides meeting not with a mathematical precision, but as it were by mutual attraction, with an upward tilt at the meeting point symbolic of the joy of union.

But this is only a part of the sculptors' contribution. I imagine that the suggestion of making the decorative reliefs sweep upward instead of running horizontally, as in temple decoration, must have appeared to the stone-masons as an exciting novelty, and their enthusiastic response is evident in their work. Among the decorative bands are verses from the Qur'an, inscribed in bold relief. The architect may have known of a mausoleum in Uzkund, built in 1187, where the Quranic inscription has a setting of flowers and foliage, and have proposed to do the same here. But while the floral setting in the Uzkund monument is stylised and repetitive, the setting in the Qutub screen is naturalistic, warm and vocal. The Hindu sculptor did not know anything about the doctrine of revelation, he knew only about nature, and instinctively he has

represented the Qur'an as an utterance of nature, the voice of leaves and flowers, the whisper of the woods.

Some thirty years later, the mosque was enlarged, and the screen extended to maintain symmetry. The arches of this screen do not have the same proportions. In the relief work on their frontage there is stiffness and austerity ; the exuberant naturalism of the earlier work has given place to something severely geometrical. An archaeological expert has expressed the view that this relief work is in the Saracenic style, and must have been executed by imported craftsmen This is unlikely. The arches are still corbelled , there is still lack of faith in the strength of the true arch. As for the ornamentation, it is doubtful if a sufficient number of skilled stone-masons would have been found in the neighbouring Muslim principalities or would have been worth recruiting when so much skill was available in India. Besides, Persian and Central Asian ornamentation is of tiles or inlay, and depends for its effectiveness very largely on colour compositions. On the screen built by Iltutmish and on the inner walls of his tomb the patterns may be similar, but they have been executed on different material. They are neither plastic nor colourful and give the impression of overloading. The craftsmen must have been Hindus or Indian Muslims, but because more than a generation had passed since the construction of the first screen, they would be new men, less imbued with the sculptural traditions of their fathers. In any case, a change was bound to come, with architecture seeking independent self-expression.

In the context of this aesthetic struggle, the Qutub Minar stands midway between the first screen of the Quwwat-al-Islam mosque and its extension. It was built in two stages, the first storey in 1199, and three storeys by Iltutmish about 1230. Firoz Tughlaq repaired the Minar because it had been damaged by lightning, and very unwisely converted the fourth storey into two. He somewhat increased the height of the Minar, but also introduced incongruous elements. Apart from the alteration made by Firoz, the Minar would have been planned as a whole, Iltutmish

completing what Qutubuddin Ibak had left undone. An inscription—the lower band on the second storey—states that Iltutmish ordered the completion of the Minar.

What was the idea underlying the Minar ? It would have gratified the religious if it were called a mazna, a lofty tower from which the muezzin called the faithful to prayer. There are examples of such maznas in Muslim countries, but probably not as tall as even the first storey of the Minar, which is 95 feet high. There are also examples of free-standing Minars which have an architectural significance of their own. The lower we now call the Qutub Minar has not been so called in the contemporary histories. It could have been used as a mazna But its architectural qualities most probably derive from the fact that a small group, determined to occupy and rule for all time as much territory as it could, found it necessary to create a symbol for its confidence in itself, in the stability of its power and in its destiny. But great architecture, let us remember, is the instinctive self-assertion of man against time and death. It is the offspring of inspired moments. The purpose of a great monument cannot, therefore, be too precisely defined. It is almost always something beyond what the planners themselves could have stated in words.

The Minar has a Central Asian Turkish ancestry. There is a minar at Jar Qurgan, near Termez, built in 1108–9, which has the appearance of 16 round columns tied together, and there is a strong resemblance between it and the second storey of the Qutub, which has a pattern of rounded flutes in section. The Minar-i-Kalan, at Bukhara, built in 1127, has a round, arched clerestory at the top, supporting a cluster of arches, like three balconies of the Qutub. The Minar at Ghazni consists in part of a polygon with deeply indented angles, a form of which the wedge-shaped flanges of the third storey of the Qutub could be considered a variation. An almost contemporary structure was the minar at Wabkent, built in 1196–97. All these minars have a taper. But these were examples for the Muslim architects of the Qutub, Fazl bin abi'l Maali, whose name is inscribed near the entrance, and Muhammad

Amir Koh, under whom the minar was completed in the reign of Iltutmish, as appears from an inscription on the side of the doorway of the third storey. One question of basic importance would have been decided the way the Hindu craftsmen wanted it to be. These craftsmen, in accordance with their inherited notions, would have insisted that to ensure stability, horizontal pressures should be entirely eliminated. The minar has, therefore, a very pronounced taper. Its diameter is 46 feet at the base and, as it now stands, 10 feet at the top As originally built, in four storeys, the top would have had a diameter of perhaps 12 to 15 feet. There are notations on the south face of the minar's plinth which Cunningham believes refer to an adjustment of about an inch in the plumb-line of the building. In this respect, the Hindu master-masons would have left nothing to chance. The minar at Jar Qurgan has a fairly high plinth, the Minar-i-Kalan of Bukhara, a very low one, and there would not have been much discussion if the Hindu master-masons insisted that there should be no visible plinth. They were not used to the idea of the plinth as a distinct feature of a building. The rounded flutes and wedge-shaped flanges as we see them give the Minar an exquisite sculptural character, and it is my conjecture that this, too, is either entirely a contribution of the Hindu master-masons or their interpretation of the treatment of the facing shown in the plans or explained to them by word of mouth. The massing of inscriptional and ornamental bands and decorative mouldings below the balconies reminds us of the decorative treatment of temple walls, but the restraint shown in the spacing out of the other bands on the shafts of the three storeys of the minar is something on which the Muslim architect would have insisted. The balconies, which form one of the most attractive features of the Minar are an essentially Muslim idea, and so are the clusters of miniature alcoves, or vaulted arches, which support them. But, in a network that looks like honeycombing and in the cusped tracery reminiscent of temple ceilings, there is evident an attempt to disguise architectural forms with sculptural effects. The result of the technical and aesthetic cooperation of the Muslim architects and

Hindu master-masons is one of the most striking monuments of the world. But in form as well as meaning it is not what it was probably meant to be. The Turks wanted to create a symbol of power and stability ; with its upward surge, expressed in the taper and in the almost organic emergence of one storey from another, the Qutub Minar is such a symbol. But the Hindu sculptor has also put his stamp on it. You can have power, he seems to have said, but I shall so suffuse it with beauty that those who see it will know that beauty is the only power that endures.

Political conditions following upon the death of Iltutmish and up to the time Alauddin had ensured security from foreign invasion and established law and order in his dominions were not such as to stimulate architectural ambitions. At least, there is nothing in the Qutub complex that can be traced to this period Stone-masons would have been employed in miscellaneous minor projects and by degrees lost touch with their sculptural traditions. Perhaps the need for employment forced them to accept the new styles, to learn the technique of building the true arch and to put trust in its strength. Some of them may have experimented in buildings that no longer exist, in various methods of assimilating sculpture and architecture. For the next monument that we see, the Alai Darwaza, is the work of practised hands and of minds thoroughly versed in the art of creating pleasing compositions of architecture and sculpture.

As originally planned, the Alai Darwaza consisted of a domed chamber with three entrances and a fourth archway leading into a portico, which was projected into the enclosure of the mosque. There were extensions also sideways, east and west, to combine the Darwaza with the enclosure wall in a harmonious fashion. The portico, which must have been built on the trabeate system, with a low roof, to be in keeping with the colonnade around the courtyard of the mosque, is no longer there, but the extensions still form visible parts of the existing structure. The architect of the Alai Darwaza was beyond doubt a Turk steeped in the Seljuq and earlier traditions of monumental architecture. He must have had

the good sense to seek out the best stone-masons and sculptors and to consider how their skill could best be utilised before he gave a final shape to his plans. In this process he must have had consultations and discussions, and his plans must have been endorsed by his master-masons before they were submitted for final approval. The idea of three entrances into a chamber and an entrance into the mosque across a portico would have been his, and it would have appealed to his master-masons because of its resemblance to the structure of a temple. People would enter the mosque through what they thought was a gateway, but when leaving they would pass, like Hindu worshippers, from the *mandapa*, or the vestibule, into the *viman*, or shrine.

Structurally, the Alai Darwaza is a marvel of inspired simplicity. The arches of the three entrances are so exquisitely proportioned that they are equally beautiful whether seen from the outside or the inside, although the floor of the chamber is several feet above the ground level. The square of the chamber is converted almost imperceptibly into the circle of the dome, which rests on elegant squinches of a simple, sculptural pattern. From the outside, the dome is rather low. In fact, it is not a separate unit of the structure but the roofing of the vault, the height of which, when seen from the inside, is very impressive.

The plinth of the Alai Darwaza is indicated by means of a projection round the base, which could be used for sitting on, and of a cornice, but in a way, it has also been concealed in sculptural patterns, most of them of the traditional Indian style. This may be taken as an instance of the architect adapting a feature of temple architecture to suit his own purpose or as a contribution of the Hindu master-masons, who would have had considerably less opportunity to display their skill if the plinth had a straightforward architectural character. The superstructure of the Darwaza appears from the outside divided into two storeys, the distinctive features of the lower storey being ornate arches, small replicas of the main arch, two on each side of it, and of the upper storey rectangular panels formed by a judicious and pleasing juxtaposition of inscrip-

tional bands of marble and red sandstone. The impression of height conveyed by the lofty entrance arch is toned down by the panels into a quiet dignity, and the eye could wander long and admiringly over the whole facade without any feeling of satiety or weariness. The three main entrance arches, with their white and red nookshafts, their intrados or inside surfaces alive with patterns of foliage in deep relief, their spearhead fringes and their marble frames have a beauty and a meaning all their own. If the central arch of the Quwwat-al-Islám mosque leads outwards into an uncharted world, the entrance arches of the Alai Darwaza leads inwards to a beauty distilled in lucid and harmonious detail, which holds the eye and mind in thrall.

And what of the two exactly similar arches, one of red sandstone and one of marble, on the fourth side, where one now enters the mosque enclosure, but which formerly led into the portico? These arches, with their delicately suggested trefoil, are something unique, they have no ancestry and no offspring, Indian or foreign. They obviously bear the impress of the ivory-worker who has undertaken an adventure into the dimensions of architecture, or let himself be lured by a dream. But the social and religious aspect of these arches is even more significant. For, quietly and unobtrusively, they tell the Muslim worshipper that as he enters his mosque he is also passing beneath the shadow of a temple, under an archway that was created for him by devotees of beauty who could see all facets and all forms of truth.

The Alai Darwaza is the parting kiss of architecture and sculpture. They meet in fruitful union in Gujarat, but the next monument of significance in Delhi, Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq's tomb, is pure architecture disdainful of any sculptural devices and interpretations Even in Gujarat, though the ascendancy of architecture does not appear in any chronological sequence, architecture has the last word in the Jame' Masjid of Champaner. And so it is evident that, while in political and social life, in literature, music and dance the movement is towards unity, in architecture the tendency is in the opposite direction, the drapery and the aesthetics of sculpture

being gradually discarded so as to achieve purely architectural expression. Akbar brought artisans together from all parts of India to build Fatehpur Sikri, but all that he could achieve was a harmonious assemblage of different styles. The sculptural beginnings of Indian Muslim architecture are an indication that we must revise our perspective. For while the written record of history shows the establishment of authority by force and bloodshed, we have in the architectural record unimpeachable evidence of understanding and cooperation, of joyful participation in creative work of the very highest quality. Should not this incline us to reconsider any views we may have formed of blind hostility between Muslims and Hindus in the first stages of the Turkish occupation of north India ? War and destruction would have been inevitable in any case if ambitious men came from outside to displace the rulers of the country, but need we also assume that the people as a whole, Hindus as well as Muslims, were committed to this conflict, that there was no mutual appreciation and cooperation between the urban populations of north India, the Ghaznavi kingdom of the Punjab and lands beyond the Khyber Pass ? Surely the actual builders of the Qutub complex must have known, if not admired, each other, for how else could they have achieved such perfect understanding ? And if we assume that they knew and admired each other, we must exercise our imagination to correct impressions created by the rhetoric of the medieval historians and the political slogans of our own times.

THE PERSO-ARABIC SCRIPT

'MY PEN WORKS miracles', wrote Mir Ali, a calligraphist of Jahangir's court, 'and rightly enough is the *form* of my words proud of its superiority over *meaning*. To each of the curves of my letters the vault of heaven acknowledges its bondage, and the value of each of my strokes is eternity itself.' On the face of it, this is fantastic self-praise. But the calligraphist was admired as much as the poet, the painter, the architect, and ranked high among the creators of the most cherished forms of beauty. He was definitely superior to others because his profession was recognised by law and religion as one of the most worthy Copying out the Qur'an was almost as meritorious as teaching and reciting it, and anyone who wrote out the Holy Book in a beautiful hand was deemed to have performed a most acceptable act of worship. Calligraphy was also an art which had absorbed in itself the aesthetics of composition, line and movement, and cultured persons were expected to derive from it the exquisite pleasure of poetry. There was little reason, therefore, for the master of calligraphy to be modest.

Writing was not raised to the level of an art for the first time by the Muslims. The Iranians and particularly the Manichaeans had cultivated it, and they acquired a taste for it from the peoples of Central Asia, who were most probably influenced by the artists and calligraphists of the Han and T'ang dynasties. From the purely materialistic point of view, the cultivation of calligraphy can be traced to the manufacture of paper and the use of pen and ink. This again takes us to China, where paper was first made,

and where the first book was printed around 600 A.D. Calligraphy became significant and widely practised as a profession among Muslims because books were much in demand. Copies of the Qur'an were needed by the hundred thousand. It was obligatory for every Muslim to read the Holy Book, which meant at least that there would be a copy of the Qur'an in every house The calligraphist had to know his art well because it would have been irreverent to write the Holy Book without an honest effort to make the script look attractive. The evolution of a concept of beauty in script is in itself an interesting aspect of history.

Pre-Islamic Arabia had a language of which the Arabs were proud, but writing was not common. The earliest extant document we have of Islamic days is almost a scrawl compared with the later refined script. Contacts with Syrians and Iranians created the idea of a standardised script with an aesthetic appeal, and thus appeared the different styles of what is known as the Kufi script. There are copies of the Qur'an in this script, but the Qur'an has to be read correctly, and the Kufi script, though capable of being given highly artistic ornamental forms, could not ensure correct reading. So the script known as the Naskh was evolved. In this the letters were clearly distinguished, diacritical marks could be used, and it could be written with much greater ease and speed. Both the Kufi and the Naskh scripts were adapted by Muslims of different countries to suit their own tastes. But when painting began to be practised as an art from the 13th century onwards, the calligraphists felt that the Naskh script did not offer opportunities for realising the full value of the line and the curve, and so a third style of writing was developed, known as the Nasta'liq This brought calligraphy much closer to line drawing, and the illuminated manuscript became a synthesis of literature, painting and ornamentation.

We have in India specimens of all styles of writing. In the tomb of Iltutmish in Delhi we find inscriptions in the Kufi style as fine as anywhere else in the world and here and there are copies of the Qur'an in imposing but almost illegible Kufic. The Naskh has

been widely used, both in its decorative and utilitarian forms. But the style for which Persian and Urdu knowing Indians have opted most whole-heartedly is the Nasta'liq, and its shorthand form, known as the Shikast. Apart from books in Arabic, all the others have been written and are now being printed in Nasta'liq. It was the style used in official correspondence, in *farmans* and legal documents; it is now the style used for Urdu. Its shorthand form, the Shikast, was used for taking notes in the royal courts and later in the courts of law, for correspondence and private records. For the Urdu speaking Indian, basic literacy has consisted in the ability to read and write Nasta'liq and Shikast.

One of the things for which I personally feel grateful is the punishment I got for bad writing when I was being taught the Urdu alphabet I feel now that I was punished not for carelessness or ineptitude only but for lack of respect for culture. A person's handwriting is also a form of self-expression, and till early in this century it was assumed, I think quite reasonably, by those using the Perso-Arabic script that indifference to handwriting indicated indifference to culture as a synthesis of the various types of excellence. Everyone who could write had to be something of a calligraphist, to know to give a proper point to a reed pen, to mix his own ink, and to make his writing conform to the standards of elegance that had been achieved in the forms of address and methods of expression The Perso-Arabic script is not only a way of writing with a long history behind it, not only a heritage of great aesthetic value but a symbol of the essential unity of culture and art and an urge to the achievement of excellence in everything that is done

We are living, however, in a scientific, technological and necessarily utilitarian age. Many questions have to be answered before the full contemporary value of Perso-Arabic as well as of other Indian scripts can be assessed. How long does it take to learn reading and writing the script? Can it be used without unnecessary cost and inconvenience in all the processes of correct and good printing?. Can it meet all the demands of education in

science and technology ? How does it compare in legibility with the Roman script ? The answers to these questions that are habitually given in India by the advocates of different scripts are based more on sentiment and political policy than objective reason. Following the general practice, I could say that the Nasta'liq form of the Perso-Arabic script is as good as any other. On the basis of experiments made it has been found that adults of less than average intelligence can learn to write it in 35 half-hour or 17 full-hour lessons, and those who speak Urdu or some form of Hindustani but cannot write it could learn to do so in ten days. The number of spelling mistakes made by those learning Urdu is certainly not more than students make in English. If the lithographic process is adopted, printing of the Perso-Arabic script can be cheaper and almost as quick as in type. Correct printing, as we all know, is a matter of luck. But the most ardent lover of the Perso-Arabic script will hesitate to maintain that the ordinary lithographic process could be used for printing scientific or technological works As regards legibility, it could be said in defence of the Perso-Arabic script, that judgements on this point are liable to be subjective I for one would not, however, let it go at that The Perso-Arabic script cannot be reduced below a certain point without becoming illegible. It may not be inferior to Hindi in this respect, but it cannot, by any means, compare with the Roman.

Would it be advisable, in the interest of the survival of Urdu, which means of the adaptability of Urdu as a language to all the modern requirements of scientific education and the preparation of scientific and technological literature, to discard the Perso-Arabic script ? The answer to this is that if by the Perso-Arabic script we mean the Naskh script, which is used in all the Arabic speaking countries and Iran, the question of a change in script does not arise. But in India a very large minority, if not the majority of those who speak Urdu and are keenly interested in its survival are non-Muslim. They regard the Nasta'liq script, which is now being used, as Indian, and the Naskh as Islamic. Urdu

being an Indian language, its script should also be Indian. They are not interested in the historical origins of Urdu or of the scripts in which it could be written, and if they had to choose between Urdu in the Naskh or the Roman script, they might choose the Roman. Muslims who desire the survival of Urdu should consider this matter with all seriousness They are themselves not used to the Naskh script, and apart from some rare examples, books and journals printed in Naskh type have not been popular Nasta'liq type cannot be made without destroying all the beauty of the script, and even if its beauty is sacrificed , the technical difficulties in using this type are formidable. The Perso-Arabic scripts are creations of great beauty, but the Urdu language is more precious than the script in which it is written. Its survival is not threatened by other languages, nor is the Perso-Arabic script endangered by other Indian scripts. The real risk lies in the possibility of the script isolationg the Urdu language from the modern world of science and technology, and delaying the attainment through Urdu of the knowledge which moves the wheels of life.

INDO-IRANIAN SYNTHESIS IN LITERATURE

I DO NOT know when the first Iranian nightingale poured forth its passion for the rose in full-throated song But this is an instance where time and circumstances do not matter , the nightingale and the rose have become poetic images which are an eternal symbol of the heart inspired to lyrical eloquence by the vision of beauty. All over the world there has been the ardour of love, and at all times beauty has had its moment of glory. Everywhere imagination has brought the two together, to make them timeless and to give life perhaps its only meaning But I do not think there is, in any literature except the Persian, an image that is, to the same degree, daily bread and heavenly sustenance for the poet, and commonplace fact and exquisite novelty for the lover of literature Persian poetry has other images also, as typical as the nightingale's adoration of the rose ; cup, cup-bearer, wine, intoxication and, the source and origin of them all, the beloved They can be ways of saying things ; they can be the things themselves But there is always an intensity about them that carries conviction and makes all questioning irrelevant.

Iran is not a land of birds and flowers. Except in some parts, the barren waste is a striking, sometimes an over-powering contrast, to the green of the pasture, the orchard and the field. The number of men who cherish the cup is not larger than elsewhere, and perhaps the number of those who can fill it full and drink it empty is smaller. The slender, silver-footed cup-bearer of Omar Khayyam, whom every poet has conceived in different forms and different

moods, is perhaps entirely a poetic fiction. The place where lovers assemble to drink, where their thirst and longing evokes the fascinating illusion of the cup-bearer, warm-hearted and generous, or gay and mischievous, clad in the garment of dazzling mystery, or just too humanly attractive, this place, called the *maikhana,* would in reality have been as ungainly as the English translation of its name, the wine-house Why, then, has there been such a concentration of the poetic fancy on these things, why has the custom of drinking, common to almost all the peoples of the world, become so rich and meaningful an allegory, the fountain-head of a vast world of thought and feeling, of aesthetic achievement and spiritual endeavour ?

One reason, not particularly Muslim or Iranian or Indian, is the inevitable reaction of human nature, in its search for balance and harmony, against the tediousness and legalistic stiffness of orthodoxy. The human spirit, when a new message has brought it deliverance, seeks freedom, space, opportunity. The creative force of a new idea drives it to establish new empires, worldly and spiritual. But when this initial force is spent, the need for consolidation is felt, the virtues of intellectual and social discipline are cultivated, and the best laws are made with the best intentions. The spiritual and worldly home thus created is then lived in, wisdom becomes an inheritance and not a personal acquisition, peace and security are not only desired but imposed, and punishment for any form of deviation, for any disposition to intellectual adventure, is considered necessary This is the age of orthodoxy It is the age also of repression and revolt, in which the human spirit attempts in different ways to shake off the fetters which its own logic has forged. It does not succeed always or entirely, but the form which its development takes, if it is not affected too much by political or social accidents, is mysticism. In Muslim history these four phases can be clearly distinguished They can be distinguished in the history of other religions also. But, of course, we should not imagine that these developments in spiritual thought followed a precise pattern, or that the response to a new faith, the expansion

and consolidation of its particular way of life, the establishment of its orthodoxy, the expression of its mysticism followed an evolutionary logic unaffected by the vagaries of human nature and earthly circumstances. The poetic religion of the *Rig Veda* leads to the expansion of the Aryans, the Aryan way of life is solidified in Brahmanic orthodoxy, which has to face the challenge of Upanishadic mysticism and a host of men adventuring into unknown lands of spiritual experience. From these Buddhism emerges as a creative force, with a momentum that takes its message far and wide across seas and mountains. Orthodoxy could not take a common Buddhist form in this vast expanse of territory. Buddhist orthodoxy was the orthodoxy of sects, but it was rigid enough to generate a reaction that took the form of a mystic adoration of the Buddha, of the sensuous images of Bharhut, Sanchi, Amaravati and Ajanta, and of the poetry of Ashvaghosha. Buddhism was brought dangerously close to Brahmanism by the development of its own religious thought, and by its mystic acceptance of all creations of the human spirit, which meant acceptance of all the people's religions We see then a revival that takes many forms, one of which is mystic devotion to a particular deity. This was about the time Islam found its way into India as the religion of Arab traders, of Arab warriors and, after a time, of Turkish conquerors.

There can be no doubt that these Turkish conquerors were the representatives of Muslim orthodoxy. If they had not succeeded, the orthodox might have sat in judgement upon them. But their success was spectacular; what was more, it provided for the Muslims of Khorasan and Iran, harassed by tribal migrations from Central Asia, both a spiritual consolation and a refuse. The orthodox did, indeed, occasionally admonish a king now and then. But the bread-winner had the last word. The Delhi Sultanate, the provincial dynasties, in spite of the irreligiousness of most of the rulers and their disregard of religious law for what appeared to them reasons of state, had the blessings of orthodoxy and the support of the vast majority of their Muslim subjects. But their

orthodox state could not exist in a political and intellectual vacuum. It had to win the active support of its Hindu subjects. It must have succeeded in this, otherwise it would not have survived. But there have been, ever since Islam came to India, those for whom political success had no value, those who wished to erase, in as many forms as possible, the dividing line between communities and cultures. It was only in this way that they could establish an orthodoxy of spiritual values, a way of life that led people towards each other, in love and prayer and ecstasy. So they became the creators of a literary synthesis that was universal as an idea and is now an inspiring memory.

It was they who brought to India the story of the nightingale and the rose, the imagery of the cup, the cup bearer and the wine. They were not only subtle and elusive enemies of orthodoxy, professing an adherence to the law more sincere and deep-rooted than the thinly veiled hypocrisy of the doctor of theology. They did not only expose the worldliness, the hunger for the joys of life crudely concealed by the grim visage of those who sought to terrify men into righteous living They asserted the right of each man to be himself, to know God in his own way. From the abject creature whose only function was to learn the law that he might obey it, to suppress not only his body but his soul that he might escape punishment on the Day of Judgement, they raised man to the dignity of a free agent by divine grace, cooling his face in the breezes of eternity, looking beyond sin and sorrow, beyond innocence and guilt, a lover, a friend of God. In the language of European humanism, they made man the measure of all things. In the poetic images of their own language, they made intensity of feeling and beauty of expression the measure of man.

The synthesis that was the result of the fusion of Iranian and Indian cultures was not an imposed solution. Rose and nightingale, cup and cup-bearer, do not force themselves into Indian literature. They become a challenge, and the consequence of the challenge is the search for a new language, a new imagery and, what is most important, a new audience. Like the Muslim *sufi*, the Hindu

reformer and saint addresses himself to the people; like the Muslim poet, the Hindu poet aspires to intensity of feeling, to imagery that will enchant the listener, to a vision of man conscious of himself and making his act of worship an event of eternal significance. Beginning with Amir Khusrau, who was proud of his Persian and delighted himself and others with his command over Hindi, we have poets and writers of eminence who follow the Persian tradition, also poets belonging to this tradition who reject it and take up the spoken language as a medium having greater appeal. We have, on the other hand, those who meet effectively the challenge of Persian eloquence and imagery, poets like Sur Das, Kabir Saheb, Goswami Tulsi Das. A synthesis takes place by degrees, and is seen at its best in Urdu poetry. We cannot define Urdu philologically. Its range is from the popular song where Persian words occur but rarely to almost pure Persian. And it should have been so. A cultural synthesis is an invitation to live and feel in a larger world, to see in love and suffering, beauty and indifference, grace and elusiveness a universalism that resents and rejects the bondage of time and space.

AMIR KHUSRAU

All that historians want to tell us about Amir Khusrau seems to me irrelevant. He was born in 1253. He called himself an Indian and was proud of it. Historians insist that he came of a Turkish family that had been driven from its home by the Mongols. His father had a fairly successful career as an officer, but he died when Khusrau was still a boy. Another relative became Khusrau's guardian. As soon as he was old enough, Khusrau, according to the common practice of the day, looked for patrons among the noblemen. He had not wanted to be educated. His teachers first tried to fit him into the usual pattern, then helped him to cultivate his extraordinary natural aptitude for versification. It was as a poet that he found welcome in the courts of the noblemen, and ultimately of kings. And for the historian it is of great interest that Khusrau composed in verse chronicles celebrating the achievements of his patrons They are contemporary sources, and therefore of great value.

As poetic compositions, however, they are pedantic, ornate, heavy. I would say they are unreadable. But in between accounts of insignificant events which Khusrau has forced his skill to exalt, there are scattered lyrics of great beauty. To Khusrau they must have provided relief from tiresome artificiality. They must also have lightened the load on his conscience, because the chronicles were written solely for the purpose of earning rich rewards. And in a way they misrepresent him and his times. He had, against his nature, to assume the coarse political attitude of conquerors, to give to wars and warriors a religious and cultural character which they

did not possess, to magnify little men and little things beyond all reasonable measure, to indulge in partiality without regard for truth and justice. It is undeniable that the kings, the nobles and the armies Khusrau glorified in his chronicles could destroy life, happiness, property ; they could inflict great suffering. This was not something that impressed Khusrau or appealed to his imagination. It was necessity, the moralist would say, necessity created by not a little greed, that made Khusrau the eulogist of noblemen and kings. Really he belonged somewhere else , to another court, to another people.

What history tells us about is the political and military activity of the Turks who established their rule in India. I would distrust any computation that would place their number above 20,000 families. Not all of these Turks were professional soldiers, and those who were would have realised, far more clearly than historians would have us believe, that they were a small minority in a vast country I do not wish to belittle their ideas and their achievements. I only wish to emphasise that these ideas and achievements had a social background, and with this our historians have not yet learnt to concern themselves. They forget that the whole country was not involved in political rivalries, that it did not participate in campaigns There was peace, goodwill, understanding, reinforced by powerful spiritual tendencies

Perhaps the most important single factor in the social background of India of those days was the influence of the sufis, the mystics, particularly of the Chishti order. We are now inclined to question their social value, because they had no plan, no programme of any kind of philanthropic activity. They had no concrete aims. They just sat somewhere, prayed, talked to people ; they gave spiritual advice, and sometimes indirect practical guidance to those who asked for it ; they had no political ideas or interests ; and if wrongs were openly committed, they prayed for a change of heart. We cannot now realise the effectiveness of this apparent inactivity. The sufi began to be called *Shah* or king. His seat became a throne, and at the times when people came to visit him, the etiquette

of the court was observed. A king could kill a thousand innocent persons ; that would be an evil fate. But he risked his throne if he took action of any kind against a sufi.

Amir Khusrau belonged to the intimate circle of the great sufi, Shaikh Nizamuddin of Delhi, whose influence, once established, was far greater than that of the most powerful kings. And this remarkable and enduring influence was always exerted to promote fellow-feeling, tolerance, reverence for all beliefs sincerely and steadfastly held. The example of the saint opened out to Amir Khusrau a vast field for the exercise of his intellectual and artistic powers. Nothing was alien to him, nothing without meaning and interest. He seems to have been completely at home in the village, to have seen how men and women lived and felt and behaved. He seems to have studied several languages, and there are still extant scores of couplets where he plays charmingly with words. His teacher had forgiven him his worldliness. He smiled at the liberties Khusrau took with ideas and beliefs, at all his poetic images, even when they inclined to be erotic. In Khusrau's lyrics, the saint figures everywhere and in all aspects, as the proud hero, as a woman of loveliness beyond description ; as the master of the wine-house, dispensing spiritual intoxication in the form of the supremely handsome, and cruelly indifferent Turk. The saint did not mind. He must have been really pleased when Khusrau abandoned the current literary language and its style, and explored the possibilities of a new medium, which he calls Hindi. The mystics believed in cultivating the spoken language, and were the first to make the people's speech the means of expressing lofty spiritual ideas. Khusrau took over from folk poetry the form of depicting the woman as the lover, and nothing that has come down to us from that period is more delightful than the mixed Persian and Hindi lyrics of Amir Khusrau. But, judging from quantity alone, these expressions of love in Indian style would seem to be literary excursions. The achievements of Amir Khusrau which have made his name endure are lyrics that he wrote for singing at gatherings where music and poetry were used as stimulants to religious

fervour, to spiritual ecstasy. Many of these lyrics express beliefs that are, from the orthodox Muslim point of view, heretical. But this heresy had the full support of a sufistic tradition of humanism, of an interpretation of religion which, while it intensified religiousness, also released the believer from the bonds of orthodoxy. It gave to the Muslim poet complete freedom as well as a peculiar spiritual status. It made the blending of intimacy and reverence, of beauty and sorrow, of poetic adventure and deep spirituality an outstanding feature of Muslim culture. The genius of Khusrau represents this quality of Muslim culture almost at its best. Khusrau has become a legend. He was called the Indian songster by his contemporaries, who thought his Persian compositions rivalled the best poetry of Persia. He was master of Indian music, the originator of particular styles of singing. He was supposed to have frolicked with village women, to have amused and confounded them with his riddles and hit wit, to have so mixed up Persian and Hindi in his speech as to make people laugh and feel at one with each other. A song that is sung when the bride is leaving her home, something entirely and utterly Indian, is said to have been composed by him. A glossary of Hindi and Persian words and phrases, a masterpiece of scholarly frivolity, is believed to be a literary exercise of his. Whether one wishes to laugh or to make love, to study philology or folklore, to sing or to induce spiritual exaltation, Khusrau is there as the archetype. With him tradition becomes suddenly rich, versatile, exquisite. For centuries he was looked upon as the creator of Indo-Muslim culture And even now we have to recognise him as the source of much that we cherish

GHALIB—I

IN ONE OF his letters, written during the last years of his life, Ghalib says that he was sent as a punishment from the world of spirits to the earth on the 8th Rajab, 1212, which according to our reckoning would be the 27th December, 1797. He continues the metaphor by saying that he was in judicial custody for 13 years, and then fetters were put on his feet, meaning he was married. At the same time, for offences which he does not mention, he was subjected to the hard labour of creative writing. He goes on, with the same delightful flippancy, to give an account of his unavailing escapes from prison, that is, the occasions on which he left Delhi, and to swear that he will not indulge in such escapades any more. He could not have made a different resolution, because he no longer had the strength to run.

The only instance in Muslim tradition of a spirit being exiled from heaven is that of Satan, who was punished by God for his refusal to bow before Adam. If Ghalib had been reminded of this he would have agreed cheerfully that it was no doubt a parallel case

He could talk and write cynically about himself without fear of being misunderstood, because he was doing it all the time. He was overflowing with goodwill and affection, and had an endearing charm of manner. His instinct for generosity made him live beyond his means and kept him in perpetual financial worry. Still he felt he had not done enough 'If I could not make myself responsible for everybody, I could at least see that there was no one without food and clothing in the town where I live,' he says

in one of his letters. And, in another context, he says, 'Every son of Adam, be he Muslim, Hindu or Christian, I hold dear and regard as my brother. I do not care if others believe in this or not.' Such was Ghalib's nature To this was added the charm of his appearance. He was tall and handsome, with a complexion the colour of sandal-wood, a high nose and fine, large eyes.

Ghalib was the product of his age It was an age of anarchy. with the Pax Britannica gradually asserting itself Ghalib must have written quite a good deal about the shamefulness of submitting to alien rule, but seems to have discarded all except a few verses in the first collection of his poems as not conforming to the generally accepted criterion of good poetry. Ghalib's mind was not limited by his age, but the mind of his age was limited, and for genuine appreciation he looked to the future more than to the present.

Eager imagining of joys to be is burden of my song .
I am a nightingale, my garden yet unborn.

Let us have a closer look at his age The culture of the time was obstinately, narrow-mindedly urban, seeking protection within the city walls against a surrounding barbarism. The desire to be closer to nature would not take a man outside the city, because it was believed that nature fulfilled itself in the gardens, the cypresses, the flowers and the breezes of the city. The poetic images which present the world outside the city walls are caravans, stages on long journeys, wasteland, wilderness, whirlwinds, stormy seas, ships struggling to keep afloat, sea-shores promising security and peace, or symbolising lack of energy and enterprise But it was the city which offered the widest choice of symbols. Here was the tavern, the saqi, the wine ; the puritan with his frown and hypocritical sermonising ; the street, the beloved's house with its gate and gate-keeper, the roof on which one could hope to catch a glimpse of the beloved. It was in the city that men assembled, that candles were lighted and moths set an example to lovers by immolating themselves in the candle's flame. It was in the city that the beloved would appear, in an assembly or in madly longed for privacy.

Love and beloved are the creators of poetry. In Ghalib age, conceptions of love had already become established tradition Love could be sacred or profane, love of God or love of a perso and the unique feature of Persian and Urdu poetry is the organ assimilation of sacred and profane love in a wealth of symbo where the sacred is seen through the profane as light through prism, and the profane is seen through the sacred as God's light i the nature of man.

The beloved in Persian and Urdu poetry is something of a enigma. Not only is God as the beloved almost a human perso the human person seems to be of a doubtful or disguised sex. Bu except where a Persian tradition of representing the beloved as youth is followed, there is no doubt that the Urdu poet's belove is a woman. What is not generally admitted is that the setting not the home but the salon of a courtesan. For the love that th poet speaks of was not the love that leads to courtship an marriage. To be married was the right of the 'free', as opposed t the slave, women. Traditional ideas of honour required that fre women should be kept out of sight, and they had to be kept out c sight in literature also. The 'bazm', or assembly, which is mer tioned so often in Urdu poetry could not have been a famil gathering, or a party given by a host to his guests or a club meet ing for conversation or discussion. Such assemblies would nc have a 'beloved' or 'rivals' or obnoxious strangers, but the courte san's salon would, of course, have them. There are light, almo frivolous verses of Ghalib which make this quite clear.

I said that beauty's parlour of strangers should be free ;
With cruel wit she turned me out to show this is how,

Or, when he says,

Ah, well, she does not worship God, what if she's faithless to
Why go to her and risk your soul, if she's a snare for you ?

It is curious how few readers of the Urdu original wonde what kind of a beloved Ghalib was thinking of, and I may be th first to have called these verses frivolous. The social and historica

reason for this is the habit of compartmentalised living. In Ghalib's age, the poet would not concern himself with political affairs. He was also not concerned with institutions like the family, though he might mourn the death of a dear relative. Those who heard him recite his poetry might be reminded of personal experiences, but standards of appreciation and criticism postulated a kind of social vacuum within which the poet exercised his art. The poet who wished to assure applause for himself kept within the conventional limits, a poet like Ghalib would create within himself a world of his own where every quality of his humanity would find free play.

Ghalib was a poet by nature In his own flippant manner he says he took to poetry at the same time as he began to indulge in what the theologian called 'frivolity' and 'wickedness' and 'immorality,' terms which had a special appeal for Ghalib because he delighted in mocking piety and the pious He gives the age at which he began to write sometimes as ten, sometimes as fifteen. We cannot trace his development as a poet because mostly he wrote 'ghazals' and, as an English translator of Hafiz has put it, a ghazal is "a succession of couplets often startling in their independence, in their giddy transition from grave to gay, from thought to mood. Each couplet is a whole in itself, a 'nukta' or 'point', sufficiently beautiful if it be adequately expressed, and not of necessity owing anything or adding anything to that which comes before or after." Ghazals could, of course, be arranged according to the date of composition, but the usual practice has been to put together those which end in the same letter of the alphabet, and follow the alphabetical order. Ghalib made the first selection of his ghazals in 1822, and as he does not seem to have been a good judge of his own work, he must have omitted much that we would consider great poetry now.

Ghalib's first audiences, whether elders or friends of about the same age, few or many, must have been taken aback by his not saying what they expected him to say, and using an idiom of his own to say what he did. There was a majesty in the rhythm of his

verse, and startling combinations of words to convey shades of meaning which the same words did not express when used in the conventional way. There was a condensation of thought which went far beyond the neat, epigrammatic phrases of those who excelled in skilful handling of the spoken idiom. Ghalib felt that he must fashion a new medium for himself by a fusion of the vocabulary of both Persian and Urdu, and in doing this he exercised a freedom that was not inhibited by the idiom of either language. He achieved something unique. Even where the sequence of ideas is difficult to establish, the language holds the reader enthralled.

Ghalib aimed at what he called the creation of 'new meaning.' A ghazal from his earlier phase will serve as an illustration.

> The lightning flash of beauty has consumed my sight,
> Only the eye-lashes remain, like smouldering twigs,
> Impudent relics of a burnt-out flame
> I have so strained my eyes in the endeavour
> To see the vision again, that tears have washed away
> All but my self-centredness ; there's nothing left
> Except the glance, clear as the dew-drop's sparkle
> The garden of desire has fallen victim
> To autumn's withering hand and spring again
> Will come, as pale and bloodless as my sighs
> The wonder of the saqi's eyes is gone, no more
> The festive cup goes round, and glum vicissitude
> Is all the company I have.

This can be construed, of course, as a mood of utter pessimism, a repetition, in a different and complicated form, of what other Urdu poets have said with greater lucidity. But if we examine the verses closely, we shall find almost a precise description of the stages by which the mood changes The poet has beheld beauty, like a sudden flash of lightning it has struck him blind, consumed his sight, leaving only a few smouldering eyelashes, and it seems impudent that they should show a trace of the fire when there is really nothing left But the eye was made to see, it will not give up being what it is. However, all that its self-assertion produces is the glance, sparkling like the dew-drop It is pure, no doubt, but only a dew-drop. Or, to put it differently, the bloom of the

garden is gone, it had to go, because autumn is inevitable, inexorable, and all that the passion to recreate the flowers of the garden will produce is a pale, colourless spring, as satisfying as the relief one gets from a deep sigh. Or, coming down to the images of daily life, one cannot look into the saqi's eyes and be filled with wonder, one cannot drain the cup and ask that it be refilled, one has to live with time, with meaningless change

Ghalib's religious mood and his mood of love are both primarily intellectual He could not accept any religion .

At every step the weary stopped and stayed ;
Not finding Thee, they built Thy house and prayed.
What is the temple, what is the Ka'ba ?
Baffled passion for union constructing
Myths and illusions, asylums to shelter
Its ardour, its hopes, its dreams and despair

Ghalib could admire sincerity, but saw little of it among those who claimed to worship God

Prostrate as suppliant, of prostration proud,
Submitting to God's will and yet arraying
Claims to His favour—impudence, conceit !

People look to religion for peace, but peace is unattainable .

Both heaven and earth can in the twinkling of an eye
Dissolve into tumultuous chaos · tranquility and peace
Are manifest only to the cold, sightless stare of death.

Nature did not inspire any of Ghalib's moods. He had an urban mind, and he could regard nature only as a background of human life The supreme poetic image, the creator as well as the creation of Ghalib's poetry, is man himself, and Ghalib's loftiest and fairly constant mood is contemplation of his humanity. No matter how far an intellectual or a romantic quest might take him, he returns to himself, to man Man is the garden with its flowers, the desert waste, the lover seeking union with the beloved, the pawn in the game of being and non-being, the agonising awareness of reality, the rebel, the creature crushed to dust by fate, the detached spectator, ironical, flippant, the beautiful sin that captivates Mercy, the madness that would reduce creation to chaos. Ghalib did not discover man, but he invested him with a new

insight into his own nature and the nature of life, with a passion for intellectual adventure and a courage to reject, with a confident, meaningful smile, or sheer disgust, conditions of existence which encroached upon his freedom and dignity. Man's final word, when all is said and done, could be :

> My heartache is too proud to suffer remedy :
> I am content, I have my pain, my pride.

GHALIB—II

GHALIB HAS MADE varying statements about the age at which he began to compose verses ; the earliest is ten and the latest fifteen. His education was not systematic, and his experiments in versification must have begun before his literary attainment was anywhere near adequate. He took to poetry at the same time as he began to indulge in what he calls 'frivolities' and 'wickedness and immorality', that is, with adolescence. This was about the time he was married and became entitled, because of marriage, to associate with somewhat older persons, who would also have combined composition of verses with 'wickedness and immorality'. We are left to conjecture who, if anyone, gave him encouragement and guidance, and inspired him with the confidonce necessary to cross his first literary hurdles and disregard his failures. We cannot trace his development as a poet because none of his earlier compositions can be dated. Besides, whenever a poet's *ghazals* were collected, they were always arranged alphabetically according to the last letter of the rhyming words, so that a *ghazal* written earlier could be placed much later in a collection. Finally, Ghalib made the first selection of his *ghazals* himself, now found in what is called the Bhopal Manuscript, and what he did not include in this selection has been lost for ever.

Till 1822, when he was twenty-five years old, Ghalib wrote in Urdu. Then he took to writing in Persian, a language for which he had great affection and admiration, and which he thought offered him better opportunity for self-expression than Urdu[1]. By this time he had made a thorough study of all the masters who

were held in general esteem, but it was typical of him that to establish his claim to authoritative knowledge of Persian idiom, he first invented and later denied the story of a mysterious Iranian who came and stayed at his house in Agra for two years and taught him the language. The phase of writing almost exclusively in Persian lasted till 1850, when Ghalib began to be invited to the court and had to write in the language of the court, Urdu, but he did not give up Persian. The seven years that followed are regarded as the mature phase of his Urdu poetry.

There are qualities common to the earlier and the later phase of Ghalib's Urdu poetry, which began from 1850. The lyrical element is more prominent in the later phase, but Ghalib maintained to the end his habit of drawing a few strokes and leaving it to the comprehension of his listeners or readers to complete the image. There are plenty of his verses in the apparently simple language of the second phase about the meaning of which critics are in doubt. Ghalib also did not surrender his individualism or his intellectuality, but in the court, and as a poet recognised by the court, he had to take his place among those whose poetry represented entirely different and much lower values. The compromise Ghalib made with the spoken idiom and the prevailing taste, though at some sacrifice of his independent genius, endeared him to lovers of Urdu poetry. He was no longer the peak with its snows shimmering in the distance ; one could see the mountainside also, with its forests, its breezes, its rivulets of snow changing into streams as they descended to the valley below.

It was natural for Ghalib to be influenced by other poets, specially those who were admired by his contemporaries. He has acknowledged Bedil as his master with an astonishing frankness and sincerity.

My admiration is so passionate, I cannot portray
The majesty of Bedil's genius. How can a drop
Reveal the ecstasies the vast ocean bears ?

Bedil wrote in Persian, in a style extremely erudite and involved, and Ghalib's early compositions are an

obvious attempt to write in the same style in Urdu. A learned critic has given numerous examples to show the influence of other poets, Persian and Urdu, on Ghalib.[2] The practice of holding *musha'rahs*, for which the metre and rhyme were announced in advance, tended to establish a uniformity by making the audience into judges of the merit of a composition through straightforward or oblique approbation or silence. It would also stimulate the urge to excel, but the prevailing taste would be the decisive factor. For us the question would inevitably arise whether a *ghazal*, for which the occasion as well as the rhyme and metre were prescribed could be a spontaneous and genuine poetic composition. But connoisseurs would know at once whether a poet was just offering a literary exercise in one of the approved and admired styles or had an individuality of his own. Traditional criticism distinguished between "what comes" to the poet's mind as inspiration and "what is brought in" by him as it were to fill in a blank, between the spontaneous and the forced elements of a *ghazal* There is no doubt that, with all the symbols ready and to hand the general tendency to admire dexterous manipulation of the spoken idiom, much that was mere versification could pass off as poetry.

Ghalib was a poet by nature He was extremely sensitive to public opinion, but determined at all costs to avoid the commonplace. His first audiences, whether elders or friends of about the same age, few or many, must have been taken aback by his not saying what they expected him to say, even though he did not break with the poetic tradition, and using an idiom of his own to say what he did. He did not offer them the known pleasures of poetry, but a challenge to discover the meaning he had created. They could not ignore him ; that would imply inability to understand ; it would be a confession of defeat. Besides, there was the majestic rhythm of his verse, the startling combination of words, never before attempted in Urdu, to convey shades of meaning which the same words did not express when used in the conventional way. There was the condensation of thought, which went far beyond the neat, epigrammatic phrases of those who excelled in

skilful handling of the spoken idiom, the drawing of a few bold strokes to impress the poetic image on the mind, leaving it to the listener or the reader to complete the outline of the image for himself. It is true that words and meanings were sometimes stretched to the breaking point, and Ghalib got lost in intricate landscapes of words instead of giving striking form to an idea. There is a story that an elderly admirer of his youthful genius once strung together imposing words in an utterly meaningless combination and recited the verse as something remarkable that had come to his notice In response to Ghalib's blank stare he admitted at once that the verse made no sense, but this could be the case with other verses also if the poet forgot that good poetry had to be intelligible.

Many examples could be given to show that in his earlier period Ghalib delighted in involved expression, following the style of Bedil and some other poets. But if poetry was to be the creation of new meaning in the old symbols, an addition of fresh intellectual and aesthetic experience to the traditional content of poetry, Ghalib felt that a new vocabulary would have to be assembled to serve as the medium. He fashioned this new medium for himself by a fusion of the vocabulary of both Persian and Urdu, exercising a freedom that was not inhibited by the idiom of either language. He achieved something unique. Even where the sequence of ideas is difficult to establish, the language holds the reader enthralled.

What was the new meaning Ghalib attempted to create, the fresh intellectual and aesthetic experience he desired to transmit ? Let us take as an illustration a verse from his earlier phase :

Purposeless travail all endeavour
To make this life fit prelude to the next ,
Walk the exalted path of love, distress of spirit
Is just a passing thought of weariness and rest.

A translation will not suffice. We must paraphrase, we must expand the concentrated expression to convey all that is implied. 'We are told', Ghalib says, 'that man must bring his life on earth

into accord with the life hereafter, to coordinate the immediate with the ultimate. This is tedious and unavailing. If we accept it, we ignore life's real purpose, which is to give free rein to our natural, aesthetic urge, to love, to the ardour of passion, to all that is essentially human in us. Let us be fully, richly human, let us make life into a ceaseless movement, and if ever we feel weary, let us assume that it is because we have wanted to rest, and not because the way is long. The weariness will pass as soon as we have started on our journey again'

Some will observe at once that this is an instigation to moral anarchy, some will want an analysis and elucidation of love and ardour and passion and the ceaseless movement they create, most, let us admit, will just not understand It is not difficult to see why. Those who believe in moral order do not realise that order is not an end in itself, it must lead to something. Those who demand clarity of ideas tend to be satisfied with clarity. Those who do not understand imagine that the function of the poet is to express romantic sentiments in a charming way, they want the poet to feel and speak at their own level, so that they can be pleased and mildly excited. They want to avoid, as far as possible, the strain of thinking ; they have accepted what is, they do not wish to turn their backs on everything in the contemplation of what could be, of what must be, if man is to be man and life to be really man's discovery of himself. Ghalib cannot tell us what he has discovered, he can only stimulate the urge to make discoveries. It is not the poet's function to satisfy, but to create a dissatisfaction so deep, a restlessness so unabating that we are forced to live

If in saying this, Ghalib claimed to have created a new meaning, he was justified.

Traditional methods of criticism have been applied to the final and popular edition of Ghalib's *ghazals* , his earlier phase has been almost completely ignored. Critics of the traditional type were ignorant of any literature other than Urdu and Persian, and incapable of isolating any new meaning apart from showing how concepts of the beloved, the rival, jealousy, etc had been given a

novel and individual expression. Critics of the modern type, who have had the opportunity—seldom utilised—of a comparative study of literatures and literary movements throughout the world have been so obsessed by canons of Marxist criticism that their historical and literary perspective has been distorted, and the idea of a free creative human personality is incomprehensible to them. Those not so obsessed are themselves lacking in the experience and sensitivity necessary to appreciate the working of the creative human mind. In the only study of the poetry of Ghalib's earliest phase it does not appear that Ghalib had any knowledge of the existence of women, or that his image of the beloved was in any sense a reflection of women he had loved. Ghalib is thus by implication accused of that artificiality of sentiment which the use of stylised symbols suggests, and also of that isolation from the realities of physical and social life which literary convention required, but which it was impossible for a person as full-blooded as Ghalib to accept.

From the understanding of Ghalib it is necessary to emphasise that poetry represented for him above all a form of aesthetic and intellectual self-assertion. Where self-assertion is the urge to attain self-realisation in and through some system of thought or belief, the results are different. We are concerned here with the self-assertion of the poet (and only of the Persian and Urdu poet) as an end in itself, as a striving for release from all that fetters the mind and the heart, as a search for the ultimate freedom This self-assertion implies a negation of everything except the poetic mood and the poetic image. Every mood has to be taken by itself, as complete and self-sufficient, and the change of mood has to be accepted as inevitable, because existence itself is a process of continuous change. Further, if the change of mood is to be brought home, it must be abrupt, not gradual. The *ghazal* exhibits in an exaggerated form the poet's right as well as his ability to change his mood. Any attempt at a synthesis of moods for the purpose of determining a poet's ideas or beliefs could be a repetition of Khwaja Nasiruddin's experiment of cutting off the legs and the neck of the stork to make

it look like other birds. All that the critic can do without encroaching on the poet's freedom is to look for the most prevalent moods, or those which appear most in keeping with the poet's real nature, when all his powers are fused together in the creation of the poetic image

Ghalib's most usual mood could be described as one of negation, expressing itself in his discontent, disillusionment, restlessness, pain, grief, and leading on to a denial of the value of physical existence because of its many limitations.

Like the commotion of the Judgement Day I roam
Across the worlds seeking myself ,
My dust whirls on the other side
Of non-being's barren waste.

The next verse is intended to reassure those who may have been frightened by the implications of the first.

Shy not at sight of me, you who've imbibed the illusion
Of streamlined sense and knowledge ;
Dust of the road is all I am, my twists and twirls
Have no intent, no meaning

Where is soaring desire to set its other foot, O God,
The imprint of one foot has covered this desert of a world.

I was not granted space enough
To let one mad notion scamper free ,
The longing for a wilderness my size
I've sighed and carried to the world to be.

This is both a logical and natural consequence of his urge for self-assertion, which brings him into continuous conflict with physical reality, a struggle in which the living spirit is always defeated and always returns to the fray. The mood of negation has its own symbols—wilderness, desert, lightning flash, chains, wounds, and the corresponding conditions are madness, despondency, tears, sighs, lamentation, pain of unfulfilled desires. The evils and afflictions of life are the necessary consequences of physical existence ; Ghalib sometimes blames it all on awareness, both of what is and of what could be, now taking the form of madness and rejecting the world of ordered living in favour of the desert, now demanding

of God something more worthy of man than the heaven and earth he has created. But this mood of negation, however often we may come across it in Ghalib, is not an obsession. It overflows into other moods and is in its turn softened by them. And however intense and absolute the negation may be, it is not final, for man remains.

Ghalib's religious mood, which can be called religious only in the technical sense, is not a primary but a secondary mood. He had studied the literature of sufism and took for granted the doctrine of the Unity of Existence. But the company of the pious was odious to him, even as an idea, and he was too intellectual, too self-centred, too headstrong in his freedom for that absorption in the world of the spirit which is basic to the mystical experience. He could not aspire to the bliss of annihilation in God ; annihilation was not possible because life, 'madness', pervaded every particle of the universe. And when God's mercy embraced even those who did not ask for it by falling into error and sin, when, as Spring, it came to intercede for the lovers of wine, Ghalib could address God almost as a court favourite would talk to his sovereign lord, light-hearted, flippant, apologetic but never serious about his own offences of omission and commission. And he could not ask for anything, because nothing was worth having except a heart that had no desires.

In an ode to God the sublime and the intimate are exquisitely interwoven. I have not found anything like it in any literature I know of

The tongue must beg Thee for the power of speech,
For silence has its way to catch Thy ear;
In days of gloom the stricken cry to Thee,

For Thine the lamp faint in the morning light,
Thine the despondent autumn flower.
Wondrous and colourful for the sight what man endures—
Thy work the henna'ed feet of death, in blood
of lovers dipped......
Aside from spell cast by the prayer that's granted
Thou givest piquancy to cry of pain

And lamentation becomes music for Thy ear.
Meadow on meadow lush within
The mirror of desire is Thine
And hope lost in delight of gardens yet to be.
Our worship is a veil, Thou dost adore Thyself—
For Thine the suppliant forehead, Thine
The threshold where it rests.
Resourceful in excuses, Mercy lies in wait
To bring us near to Thee.
To Thee we owe fulfilment and the pain
Of trials endured.
Sad and beyond belief
Asad should be as in a magic cage confined
When grace of movement, garden, morning breeze
Are Thine to give.

In keeping with this mood is the verse :

More thrilling than the craze for pastures green
Is resignation to the will of God :
His are the fields thirsting for rain, and His
The carefree rain-clouds floating gracefully away.

Of course there is another phase of the same religious mood :

Shame at unworthiness is my offering God's grace to win,
And claims to pious living dyed a hundred times in sin.

Ghalib's mood of love is too intellectual to have a deeply emotional quality. He has more the nature of a rebel than of a person possessed by love, seeking to surrender his self to the beloved, and while he recognises the power of beauty and is sometimes overwhelmed by it, he cannot forget or deny his nature. Some of the images of his earlier phase have a flavour we do not find later :

Restraint of modesty reflects worlds of regard ; I know
Whence springs the indignation in the tell-tale glance.

She who would captive take will watch and wait,
Invent the glance that hearts can penetrate ;
The eye of chastity has an exalted aim,
Seeking the ways its passion to disclaim.

She is all courtesy, her hand
In salutation raised, touches her curls
Scattering the wealth of charm her shoulders bear.

With her proud beauty she is minded me to slay
While my heart melts in anguish from the wound inflicted :
The sword was keen, the glance is keener still.

Beauty's supreme when in indifference clothed,
As sad dark eyes are sadder still when closed

She strikes me speechless and yet speech expects
When only silence can reveal the passion in my heart.

In the later phase his images of the lover and beloved and the sorrows of love become conventional and to that degree a lapse from his own aesthetic standards, though often enough even where he is conventional his individuality is striking In one of his *ghazals* where the mood is continuous, he is more concerned with himself than with the beloved, who appears as a figure on the roof with dark tresses scattered on her face, or as sitting opposite, the daggers of her eyelashes charpened with collyrium, or as a youthful countenance flushed with wine These are passing fancies, conventional, unreal ; he ends with the desire to remain in perpetual contemplation of the beloved, the beloved as such, an ineffable creation of the aesthetic mood. Ghalib's aspiration was the pure aesthetic experience, a glory that is known neither to the lover nor to the beloved, but encompasses both.

Awareness should be enemy of sight, sight of the eye,
Come in such splendour that neither you know it nor I.

As one who has been defeated again and again in the endeavour to convey Ghalib's meaning in a translation, I suppose I have more reason than the reader or even the student to complain of Ghalib's involved images and figures. But one must be fair Sometimes difficult language cannot be avoided. In one of his *ghazals* Ghalib has portrayed the transition from a state of exaltation to the degradation of meaningless physical existence.

This can be construed, of course, as a mood of utter pessimism, a repetition, in a different and complicated form, of what other poets have said with greater lucidity. But if we examine the verses closely, we will find almost a practise description of the stages by

which the mood changes. The poet has beheld beauty, like a sudden flash of lightning it has struck him blind, consumed his sight, leaving only a few smouldering eyelashes, and it seems impudent that they should show a trace of the fire when there is really nothing left. But the eye was made to see, it will not give up being what it is. However, all that its self-assertion produces is the glance, like the sparkling dew-drop. It is pure, no doubt, but only a dew-drop Or, to put it differently, the bloom of the garden is gone ; it had to go, because autumn is inevitable, inexorable, and all that the passion to recreate the flowers of the garden will produce is a pale, colourless spring, as satisfying as the relief one gets from a deep sigh. Or, coming down to the images of daily life, one cannot look into the saqi's eyes and be filled with wonder, one cannot drain the cup and ask that it be refilled, one has to live with time, with meaningless change

Let us go through the change of conditions again in a translation

The lightning-flash of beauty has consumed my sight,
Only the eye-lashes remain, like smouldering twigs,
Impudent relics of a burnt-out flame
I have so strained my eyes in the endeavour,
To see the vision again, that tears have washed away
All but my self-centredness , there's nothing left,
Except the glance, clear as the dew-drop's sparkle.
The garden of desire has fallen victim
To autumn's withering hand, and spring again
Will come, as pale and bloodless as my sighs.
The wonder of the saqi's eyes is gone, no more
The festive cup goes round, and glum vicissitude
Is all the company I have.

Here are some examples of what might be called abstract images, the equivalent of abstract painting :

'Tis a scarred evening where I make
A darker shadow , though I'm meeting her,
The time will pass too soon, my taper's flame
Already has the blossoming glow of dawn.

Nature did not inspire any of Ghalib's moods. He had an

urban mind, and he could regard nature only as a background of human life. The supreme poetic image, the creator as well as the creation of Ghalib's poetry, is man himself, and Ghalib's loftiest and fairly constant mood is contemplation of his humanity. No matter how far an intellectual or a romantic quest might take him, he returns to himself, to man. Man is the garden with its flowers, the desert waste, the lover seeking union with the beloved, the pawn in the game of being and non-being, the agonising awareness of reality, the rebel, the creature crushed to dust by fate, the detached spectator, ironical, flippant, the beautiful sin that captivates Mercy, the madness that would reduce creation to chaos. Ghalib did not discover man, but he invested him with a new insight into his own nature and the nature of life, with a passion for intellectual adventure and a courage to reject, with a confident, meaningful smile, or sheer disgust, conditions of existence which encroached upon his freedom and dignity.

REFERENCES

1. We cannot, however, be quite sure about his preferences. Writing in Persian he tells the reader that his Urdu collection is colourless. Later, when he reverted to Urdu, he says :

If any ask how Urdu can the envy of Persian be
Read to him Ghalib's verses once, to show him this is how.

2. Khurshidul Islam : *Ghalib.* Anjuman Taraqqi (Hind), Aligarh, 1960.

UMRAO JAN ADA

OVER TWENTY-FIVE years ago I read a review of Mirza Ruswa's novel, *Umrao Jan Ada*, in a literary magazine. I felt curious. The novel is the biography of a courtesan But what really roused my curiosity was the praise lavished on it by the reviewer, a scholar of uncompromising orthodoxy and notorious puritanism. I made haste to buy the book and read it. And I understood why the scholar had lost his hold on orthodoxy and why puritanism had lost its grip on him *Umrao Jan Ada* was the kind of person whose company and conversation would make things look entirely different.

Her life was not in any way remarkable In the disorder and decadence characteristic of the middle nineteenth century Indian states, it was nothing uncommon for a girl to be kidnapped and sold for whatever her face and figure would fetch. Such girls were bought by people who wanted domestic servants or courtesans who kept brothels or trained singers and dancers. Umrao Jan was bought by a courtesan with a good head for business, taught to read and write, and trained as a singer. She made use of her opportunities better than other girls did. She learnt Urdu, Persian and Arabic Composing verses was almost an essential accomplishment for anyone who claimed to be literate, and Umrao Jan cultivated her natural gifts with remarkable success When she was forced by the influence of her environment to adopt her mistress's profession, she distinguished herself by her qualities as a singer and even more by her wit and conversation Her life was perhaps less eventful than that of any other girl brought up with her. She

met people whom she liked and suffered many whom she disliked. Some awakened in her the faculty of dreaming, but passed all too quickly out of her life. She eloped with a man who turned out to be a robber, she was betrayed by one who should have been loyal, and protected and helped by another who was himself a scoundrel. Sometimes it seems as if a pleasant accident has really been invented to give substance to the story, but Umrao Jan lived in a world that was socially and geographically very small indeed, the world of courtesans and their friends and admirers, of nawabs and their hangers-on, of adventurers, thieves and robbers, of lovers of music and poetry, all within the petty state of Oudh, deemed to have lost its right to independence in 1856 There is nothing far-fetched in the story, not even the prudence with which Umrao Jan saved as well as spent, and the shrewdness because of which she retired before the indifference of men told her it was time to do so

We meet her in the novel when she has already retired. She gets herself invited to join a group of amateur poets who assemble occasionally in a house next to her own, and beginning with the recitation of her poems, we are led on to an account of her life, given by herself with a sweet but transparent diffidence. As she tells her story, Umrao Jan also gives her views on things and passes judgement on herself and others. Her judgements are always fair and balanced, but there is nothing original or profound in her reflections on life Every system of living evolves a philosophy of its own, spontaneously and as a matter of course, and the first prize for wisdom goes to those who are able most convincingly to affirm the truth and illustrate the justice of the principles underlying this philosophy. Umrao Jan does not aspire to anything beyond this wisdom. She does not exaggerate her sorrows, or make any claim to the possession of knowledge, conscience or virtue. All the time she is just herself, and we are so fascinated by her being herself that no doubts or conflicts are raised within us.

We begin to wonder only when the last incidents have been related and the last verses aptly quoted, when we are left with a

woman past middle age who has told us all about herself and now looks at us with a challenging smile. Do we understand her? Has she asked for understanding? Does she need sympathy or forgiveness, or only an intense appreciation of her many gifts, of her ability to rise above all situations, to live without regret? She has been so frank and open, she has invited us so often to condemn her for being what she is, she has been anxious, so ingenuously, to prevent our lifting the veil which she has obviously thrown over all the ugliness in her life, that it would be rude, almost vulgar, to attempt any form of moral judgement. But then we have to explain to ourselves the deep impression she makes on us of dignity, of innate virtue, of a detachment that not only helped her through the vicissitudes of life but seems to possess a deep spiritual quality.

It is quite clear that Umrao Jan is not the Anglo-Saxon heroine waiting for the chivalrous knight, and longing for fulfilment through love and lover. She has grown far beyond this. No surrender is possible for her: she knows too well that two persons do not become one by any process of spiritual melting or smelting. And if they could, she would not submit to it; she can exist only as an independent entity. But what of the great risks involved? What about personal security, social standing, the flagellations of a conscience worried by age, and stung to action by unsatisfied desires? What about the emptiness of life, lived for oneself and alone? These are common fears, not real in themselves, perhaps, but so constantly communicated from one to another that they become a disease which none can escape and against which immunity can be developed only through sacrifice of many of the finer human qualities. Umrao Jan seems to be well protected, first by her strength, secondly, by her culture.

What is her strength due to? I think it is a commonsense acceptance of the inevitable. This is not the same thing as belief in fate, of which the peoples of the East, specially Muslims, are so often and so lightly accused. There are, no doubt, many among us who talk of fate, but even a cursory examination makes it appa-

rent that this talk is just a cloak for ignorance, laziness or obstinate refusal to do the right thing Umrao Jan accepts the inevitable cheerfully and deliberately, making a limited study of life and men go a long way in guiding her safely across the dangerous and unsparing quicksands in which she is placed. She will have nothing to do with romance, with the uncertain quantities of human emotion, the unknown factors that govern human behaviour. She would rather be the innocent victim of circumstances than offer herself as a sacrifice on the altar of love and marriage. She would rather plead guilty with charm and get a verdict of innocence out of a fascinated jury than condemn herself with passion and lead a crusade of those whom she knows to be unjust against an injustice that is almost self-inflicted.

In fact, she is far too cultured to take all the usual talk about morality with more than a passing seriousness. What matters to her is company and conversation She would delight in planning for days and nights the strategy and tactics of an intellectual skirmish that might last for five minutes or even less What she asks of men is not admiration or love. She suspects both and will not take them at their face value or even as current coin unless she has proved to herself that they are supported by an intelligence, a discernment and a power of cultured expression equal to her own. She does not find her match and does not look for one, but is willing to give a try to such as desire it. In the end she convinces us that she has won, that of the many definitions of culture at least one is valid, and that is her definition. Culture consists in the mind moving freely upon a world in which virtue is the kept mistress of temptation, and understanding waits upon sin.

HABBA KHATOON

FROM THE EARLIEST days of the freedom movement in Kashmir, a topical poem by Ghulam Ahmad *Mahjur* was a normal feature at every important political meeting and the occurrence of every significant event. *Mahjur*'s passion rose with the tide of the freedom movement, and his verses became symbols of the new Kashmir that was in the making. It is not for me to discuss how great his poetry is, or his contribution to the liberation of his people, but one of his most memorable achievements was to restore to Habba Khatoon the position and the honour that is her due.

Habba Khatoon was not discovered. She has been everywhere in Kashmir, like her songs, ever since her lifetime Still less was she unearthed, like some glorious work of art buried under the dust of the ages. She has been a fact of every-day life and thought, so familiar that she did not stand out and be noticed. *Mahjur*'s admiration and reverence for her made people aware of her presence, of her personality, of her work as a creator of culture. And since *Mahjur* and Habba Khatoon were both poets, speaking to the same people in the same language, it seemed that one began where the other had left off, that the interval between them was an illusion, that New Kashmir came into being in the sixteenth century, that Habba Khatoon composed her songs for the people of today. Now the two have become inseparable. One cannot speak of Habba Khatoon without first paying his homage to the poet who revealed her greatness to all admirers of New Kashmir.

Mahjur has written a biography of Habba Khatoon which, we

hope, will soon be published. It throws light on all the aspects of her versatile personality and the many vicissitudes of her life. But it does not tell us what year she was born and when she died. Perhaps that could be discovered only after laborious search, and we would not be sure even then. Habba Khatoon belonged to an age when only kings were privileged to have a date of birth and of death. About other people such knowledge was unnecessary. Habba Khatoon lived in the latter half of the sixteenth century, and died seven or eight years after the final occupation of Kashmir by Akbar. We do not know how old she was when she became a queen, and several important events of her career can be only approximately dated. But what we know is enough to give a clear picture, and the fixing of dates can be left to the antiquarian.

Habba Khatoon was born in a fairly well-to-do family. Her father must have been particular about her education, or she was so gifted that she could pick up what the men-folk knew without any proper instruction, because shortly after her marriage we have evidence of her knowing Persian. Muslim custom prescribed a certain type of behaviour for girls of good family, but did not prevent a father from teaching his daughter what he wanted her to learn. Habba Khatoon, or Zoon—for that was her maiden name—must have been a great favourite of her father's, and he may have taught her all that a cultured person was expected to know. That, however, makes it all the more difficult to understand why she was, with inexcusable carelessness, married to a man who resented her being educated and refined, and was jealous both of her character and her beauty. But perhaps an adoring husband would have kept her in happy obscurity. Her sorrow revealed her to the rest of the world.

Probably the decisive moment in Habba Khatoon's life was her visit to the Sufi, Syed Mubarak. Habba Khatoon used to sing songs of her own composition while working with fellow village women in the fields or when out collecting fuel wood. She had a rich, sensitive voice, the full beauty of which could not have been

appreciated by her simple, unsophisticated audience. But her songs must have touched them deeply, otherwise those of them who went with her to ask for Syed Mubarak's blessings would not have mentioned it to him. Syed Mubarak, himself a poet, asked Habba Khatoon to sing, and after a little persuasion she agreed. Syed Mubarak had never heard songs in Kashmiri before, and never heard anyone sing so well. He suggested to Habba Khatoon the use of a Persian metre that was his favourite, implored her not to suppress her personality or conceal her gifts and promised her immortal fame. The mystic may, in a moment of exaltation, have had a glimpse of her future ; a later reporter may have put into his mouth words justified by subsequent events. But Syed Mubarak gave her the name of Habba Khatoon, and perhaps wished her to regard her visit to him as the beginning of an entirely new life.

Some time later, the crown prince Yusuf, while out hunting, saw Habba Khatoon by chance, and fell in love with her. It was arranged that her husband should divorce her, so that she might be married to him. This would appear a tyrannical procedure to some and heavenly justice to others. There is no doubt about Habba Khatoon's love for Yusuf, but a person of her character would not have reconciled herself easily to a divorce and remarriage brought about under pressure. Events do not show that love and regard for her, specially after he had become the king, was a dominant factor in Yusuf's life, and though they shared many interests, there must have been an element of strain in their relations. Twice it led to open rupture. Whatever power or influence Habba Khatoon possessed was due to her personality and not to her position as a queen. For Yusuf was pleasure-loving, negligent, weak, and easily induced to act against his better judgement. His addiction to drink must also have been a constant source of anxiety to Habba Khatoon, for whom self-control and a mystical dediction to duty were more important constituents of culture than even music and poetry.

The fickleness of the king was not Habba Khatoon's only problem. The Muslim *shari'ah* condemns 'frivolity', which can be

made to include almost everything that is not patently religious. Habba Khatoon's love of music and patronage of musicians offended the susceptibilities of those for whom the aesthetic in all its forms was essentially frivolous. A leading Muslim theologian was very outspoken in his condemnation of the vogue of music and song, and blamed it all on Habba Khatoon's court. His more ardent followers began to beat up musicians and singers, so that some fled for their lives. The heir-apparent, Yakub, threatened to retaliate, and might even have laid hands on the great theologian himself. But Habba Khatoon knew that the theologian was also a poet, and judged that his attitude to music derived its bitterness and violence from a consciousness of his own craving for it. So she made a select troupe of her court musicians learn some of his *ghazals* and early one morning, when the theologian came for his ablutions to the usual spot by the riverside, he heard divinely sweet voices singing his devotional verses. As he listened, the voices came nearer, and became more and more ecstatic. The theologian lost his sense of time, forgot his ablutions, missed his prayer. And when after sunrise his disciples came to look for him, they saw a strange sight. A band of musicians and singers sat in a boat moored to the bank, singing and playing while the holy man swayed to and fro in a rapture which had made him oblivious not only of his surroundings but even of the primary duty of saying his prayers. Habba Khatoon's love of music was vindicated, and henceforth the court musicians lived in peace.

There are other anecdotes also which show that Habba Khatoon had an almost mystical insight into human nature. But today we would consider her deep reverence for justice and for civic duty her most outstanding qualities. In spite of her great love for her husband, she could not overlook his neglect of his duties. Some years after Yusuf had become king, she left the court in protest against his disregard of the interests of his subjects, and it was with great difficulty that Yusuf discovered her whereabouts and persuaded her to return. He had to make solemn promises that he would attend to his duties, administer justice to all

without regard to their social position and strive to make his people happy and prosperous. But he forgot his promises, and a popular revolt forced him to leave Kashmir and seek asylum in the court of the Emperor Akbar. This was a symptom of weakness that induced Akbar to plan the annexation of Kashmir. His first attempt was a failure, though Yusuf so lost heart that he surrendered himself to the Emperor. He was succeeded by his son Yakub, whose fanatical persecution of the Sunnis drove them into the arms of Akbar. All the while Habba Khatoon suffered helplessly. She had lost her husband, her people had lost their freedom. For the politicians some advantages and opportunities were destroyed while fresh ones were created. The religious Sunnis could console themselves with the thought that orthodoxy had been saved, the religious Shi'ahs could find some support in Akbar's court. The common people could hope, as they always did, that a change of rulers might lighten the burden of life. But Habba Khatoon could not look at life from any one point of view She had lost her position and influence with the government. That would not matter if it meant more justice and freedom for the people. But it did not. She was a devout person, not so devout in the common sense, however, as to barter away freedom for the supremacy of her own particular sect. She was not made for political leadership Perhaps freedom meant to her only the maintenance of existing conditions, with the rulers and the ruled spontaneously and scrupulously performing their appointed tasks. Habba Khatoon put into her songs the intense sorrow that filled her heart. That touched her people more deeply than any direct expression of moral or political ideas would have done, and years after the annexation of Kashmir her songs prompted risings among the people. Habba Khatoon mourning the loss of her husband was an emotion which all could understand, and it created a mental disposition in which feelings could become political ideas, and the desire for happiness take shape as a striving for liberty. Habba Khatoon awaiting the return of her husband was the personal expression of a people's longing for the return of freedom. Habba Khatoon's songs show how the personality makes

itself universal and immortal, rousing sentiments that become the well-springs of action, spanning with intangible bridges the interval between tribulation and deliverance.

IQBAL

MOST MUSLIM POETS got themselves involved in sinfulness just to the degree that assured them against the risk of being taken for teachers and philosophers, and provided them with a springboard for those exalted flights when vision apprehends as much of absolute truth as is possible for the human mind to assimilate Iqbal (1873-1938) began extremely well, breaking through conventions and artificialities that clouded the aesthetic atmosphere as he rose towards the heavens. But then something happened. Instead of steadily looking up, he began to look down , instead of attaining the pure nudity of the poet, he wrapped himself in the gray cloak of the preacher ; instead of getting lost in truth, he became a reformer. Some fervently believe this to be the natural and inevitable unfolding of his personality ; most do not think consequently enough to draw any conclusions. There are a few who, like me, regard this as a tragedy Iqbal lived at a time when he could have made a large number of Muslims sober, enlightened and creative men ; by becoming a reformer he invested his invaluable resources in mass-producing them according to the old, orthodox pattern, using moulds that had long ago lost the cementing power of commonsense and utility. Now anyone who writes of him must beware of offending against the dignity of a prophet. The critic's only protection is the tradition which has regarded poetry as a part of prophecy. He can appraise and admire Iqbal the poet, and let Iqbal the prophet take the consequences.

Iqbal received the right kind of education—a thorough grounding in the traditional sciences and systematic instruction in

the new—and was appointed a lecturer in the Government College, Lahore. He came into prominence early in life because of his poetic gifts, and was much in demand at conferences and meetings held to bemoan the sad plight of the Muslims and exhort them to bestir themselves. His is not the only instance of poetry being asked to serve as the handmaid of reform, nor is it the only instance in which a poet, through forced contemplation of the circumstances of the Indian Muslims, lost sight of humanity. The seeds of specialised if not exclusive thinking and writing about Islam and the Muslims had already been sown in his mind when Iqbal went to Europe for further study in 1905, and he was in the mood to discover that European science and philosophy was showing humanity the road towards Islam This, according to my own firm belief, is a perfectly tenable position. But it would be disastrous to imply that the Muslims of today could stand proudly where they were now or had been five hundred years ago, and expect modern knowledge to come to them and make grateful acknowledgement of their superiority. However, political policies and events—European imperialism and general cultural aggressiveness, the Italian invasion of Tripoli, the wars of the Balkan States against Turkey, the world war and its aftermath—did not create an atmosphere conducive to a purely human outlook. Iqbal was forced to adopt the tactics of self-defence, not only against the hostile and destructive elements in western civilisation, but against the forces liberated by human progress—creative nationalism, democracy, liberalism, freedom of women In his passionate love of the Muslims he overlooked the deep inconsistency of preaching to them, on the one hand, that they should, like the eminent personalities of their history, laugh at suffering and death and develop within themselves the firmness of the rock-hewn fortress and, on the other, advocating political separation from the Hindus because otherwise they would be crushed and their religion and culture obliterated by the economically and educationally more advanced Hindu community. There is no continuity between one poetic moment and another, and the poet is not concerned with those

who hear or read his verses. But the preacher has to see that one sermon does not contradict another, and religion does not go down because love of God is stultified by fear of the devil.

Iqbal could create poetic values in the most time-soddened sentiments ; what was new in him was fresh as the dawn. Let it suffice that his turning a preacher is a matter of regret. He was beyond doubt a great poet and a most lovable man.

Urdu was naturally Iqbal's medium when he first began to write poetry After his return from Europe he affected a preference for Persian. It is idle to discuss which medium gave better opportunity for the expression of his genius ; he was at home in both, and he did not give up either. His *Mansnavi Asrar-o-Rumuz* is his most didactic and perhaps weakest work , the *Bang-i-Dira* contains his freshest, the *Bal-i-Jibril* his maturest compositions. His *Payam-i-Mashriq* is a poetic response to Goethe's *West-Ostlicher Diwan,* and reflects more than any other work the wide range of his vision and the catholicity of his ideas. The *Jawid-Namah,* following the tradition of Ibn Arabi's *Futuhat-i-Makkiya* and Dante's *Divine Comedy,* is a book of judgements In his *Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam,* Iqbal began boldly and ended timidly, sometimes disowning the conclusions that followed from his own arguments. The attempt to identify the whole of western science and philosophy with extracts from thinkers and writers selected for special reasons by himself also does not carry conviction.

Iqbal rejected Muslim mysticism in principle as something promoting passiveness and quietism, but he was deeply imbued with it. He rejected western humanism as a spiritual blind alley, but his poetry is steeped in humanism.

> *Come, nestle in many bosom for a while,*
> 'Tis such a weariness being God and Father

It is something that would occur most easily to a mystic contemplating the self-inflicted sorrows of mankind and God's pathetic omnipotence. His humanism appears most clearly in his identification of Satan with man's determination to learn for himself. Some of

Iqbal's poems and many of his verses indicate that he could move far away enough from orthodoxy to be able to view traditional beliefs objectively and critically, that when he spoke of man's responsibility as God's representative on earth he was not repeating a theological cliche but asserting the essential freedom of man's will. Iqbal's mysticism and humanism—the blending of which is a unique feature of Persian and Indian Muslim poetry—is a flower that grew on the stem of orthodox belief. There can be no flowers without trees; and need the tree ask to be forgiven because the flowers are rare and lovely ?

Iqbal was knighted because he was an outstanding Muslim : in politics he was never a force to be reckoned with, but he participated in important political discussions and was invited to attend the Round Table Conference in London. The distinction he attained did not affect the simplicity of his nature. He never had enough of money and often less than enough. He lived in a shapeless sort of house and was most of the time to be seen in a corner of its front verandah or an adjoining terrace. Anyone could visit him for any purpose at any time, but the particular hours for visitors were from about four in the afternoon till late at night. He sat on his bed and smoked his hookah and talked. He did not show preference for any type of visitors or any variety of topics. Nothing restrained the flow of his conversation, which possessed an inexhaustible charm and reflected the amazing versatility of his mind. At home he was dressed invariably in a shirt and a shalwar · his outdoor dress was the typical Punjabi combination of a coat, a necktie and a shirt hanging loose over a capacious shalwar. He did not seem to care for anything, least of all for the time spent in aimless conversation with aimless persons But he was lively and lovable, and even idle questioning would quickly reveal how intensely concerned he was with the political and spiritual fate not only of the Indian Muslims but of all mankind.

GURU NANAK THROUGH MUSLIM EYES

EVERY RELIGION HAS an essence and attributes, a core of ineffable spiritual experience and attributes that begin to be acquired as soon as the attempt is made to communicate it through language and give it visible form in modes of worship and social institutions. The attributes make the spiritual experience a part of the historical process, and the whole existing system of habits, traditions and economic relationships begins to act as an assimilating, modifying, equalising influence The history of Sikhism should be considered in this light. We are, however, not concerned with Sikh history here, not even with the confirmation of the original experience by the nine succeeding Gurus, but only with Guru Nanak, and with the question whether he was, or was not affected by Islam and the spiritually most potent form Islam had taken in India, sufism.

The features which appear common to Islam and Guru Nanak's teaching are belief in one God, at once transcendent and immanent, the God of all mankind, not to be represented by any physical symbol ; the equality of all men as men ; the organic fusion of the spiritual and worldly life, of worship with the fulfilment of social obligations ; a community life based on work, worship and generous sharing of what is earned, a sadh sangat, or organised community living as an expression of the religious ideal, and dhikr, the repetition of God's name as a form of prayer The easiest explanation of these common features would be to describe Guru Nanak's environment, the monotheism of the Muslims, the prevalence of a socially unjust and morally indefensible caste system, the propagation of their ideas by the sufis, the preparation

of the ground for a synthesis of beliefs by the Bhakti movement and then to show how, the Muslims and the Hindus being what they were, it was impossible for Guru Nanak to identify himself with the religion of either. This is what is normally done as regards the essence of Guru Nanak's teaching. An examination of the attributes, of the historical process which gave Sikhism its known form could be made to prove either that Sikhism is a more than half Islamic belief lost in its Hindu environment or a reformed Hinduism in which certain Islamic doctrines, particularly the ideas of a casteless society, were adopted as a measure of reform.

Such explanations may appear adequate so far as the facts, the external factors, are concerned. There is plentiful evidence in history of the assimilation by one people of the ideas and beliefs of another, also of conversion for the sake of advantage or because of a genuine change of heart. But there is also evidence in history of a spiritual experience, a revelation which becomes a creative force and gives birth to a new religion and a society with its own *elan vital*. It is the nature of the new religion and the strength of the *elan vital* by which we estimate the quality of the original spiritual experience.

According to Islamic belief, there is an essential faith revealed directly to all the peoples of the world through a prophet or messenger. Logically, every such messenger has to be the last ; he cannot declare his revelation to be incomplete or ask his people to wait for another messenger. Belief in the one God is the essence of this universal, basic faith. According to the knowledge we possess at the moment, monotheism was first preached by Pharaoh Amenophis IV (1380-1362 B.C). In one of his hymns to the supreme God, Aton, he says :

'How much is there that thou has made, and that is hidden from me, thou sole God, to whom none is to be likened ! Thou hast fashioned the earth according to thy desire, thou alone, with men, cattle, and all wild beasts, all that is upon the earth and goeth upon feet, and all that soareth above and flieth with its wings.'

'The lands of Syria and Nubia and the land of Egypt—thou puttest every man in his place and thou suppliest their needs. Each one hath his provision and his life-time is reckoned.'[1]

The Egyptian people were not as spiritually sensitive as their Pharaoh, and belief in the one supreme God, Aton, did not survive Amenophis IV. But belief in the 'sole God, to whom none is to be likened' appears again and again. However, if we examine the religious history of the Jews, the Christians and the Muslims, this belief in the one God is either accepted as a theological dogma and becomes a habit, without stimulating the believer's mind or it is what the sufis called an 'occurrence of the heart', a kind of revelation by its own nature direct, independent and original. If this could be true of a professedly monotheistic community like the Muslims, it would be patently wrong to assume that belief in the one, true God, as ardent and overpowering as Guru Nanak's could have been communicated in any sense or manner. An imaginative reconstruction also of social life in the Punjab of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, with Muslims exercising political authority in their own interest and committing excesses every now and then that hurt the religious sentiments of the Hindus, would not make it appear plausible that their monotheism would attract the sensitive Hindu. During the three hundred years or more during which Muslims had lived in the Punjab before Guru Nanak was born, Muslim monotheism would have ceased to be a striking novelty and become a commonplace. And we have no evidence of Guru Nanak having come into contact with any Muslim during his impressionable years who could have transformed the commonplace into a striking novelty The revelation that came to Guru Nanak must have been as direct and immediate and as independent of history and social circumstances as the religious records of the Sikhs show it to be.

Shortly after his enlightenment Guru Nanak is reported to have uttered the cryptic phrase, 'There is no Hindu, and no Mussalman.' This can be taken to mean that he thought both Hindus and Mussalmans had strayed away from their true paths.

But with the effects of his own experience fresh in his own mind, he would have been more inclined to a positive assertion than to a critical appraisal in his later hymns. 'There is no Hindu and no Mussalman' was perhaps another way of saying that 'There is no Hinduism, no Islam ; what is valid is my own vision, my own dispensation, which I have just received.' And if Guru Nanak did mean this, we should not take it as a rejection of Hinduism and Islam but as a revelation of the inevitable conflict between direct and transmitted experience. Hinduism is not under consideration here. The Muslim sufis who claimed to know God for themselves had to beware of expressing too clearly and openly what their experience necessarily led them to believe. Mansur Hallaj paid the penalty for declaring that he was 'the Truth', and his example served as a warning to others. They generally confined themselves to rejecting the 'books', the faith as learnt by a process of transmission, and to putting in its place the 'condition', the spiritual state, in which man is in direct contact with his Creator. 'The sufi is he on whom conditions pass that are known to God only, and who is with God in a way that is known to God only', another sufi, Abu Sulaiman al-Darani, has said, and where relationship with God is so ineffable and so direct, the recognition of an intermediary seems out of place.

This is the conclusion we must draw from all that Guru Nanak has said about God. So far as Islam is concerned, he made this clear in his reply to Mian Mitha :

The first name is that of God ; how many prophets are at His gate !

This is not a denial of any prophet ; in fact, it is a confirmation of the Islamic doctrine that prophets have been sent to all the peoples of the world. It also indicates, however, that the acceptance of any particular prophet implies acceptance of a transmitted spiritual experience, and if one is to do that, one will be confronted with the situation of many prophets to open one gate, and whom among the prophets could one choose ? It could be said, in parenthesis, that acceptance of the Muslim prophet would have meant

not only acceptance of the whole religious tradition of the Muslims but a repudiation of his own spiritual experience and an abdication of his freedom to say all that he felt to be necessary and true.

Only someone who has experience of revelation or an 'occurrence of the heart' is, presumably, aware of its nature, but even he cannot communicate it except through language. Once language is used, associations irrelevant to the experience are introduced. One cannot refer to God without using a name, but when any name is used, beliefs of others who have used it earlier inevitably become a part of the spiritual context and indicate a strong similarity if not an identity of belief, which can be very misleading. On the other hand, any name of God that has become a part of common speech cannot be disowned without a rejection of the validity of all the spiritual experience associated with the name, which may not be intended. Neither Kabir Saheb nor Guru Nanak had the choice of not using any of the names of God already current, and because they used both the Hindu and the Muslim names the impression is created that their spiritual function was to present a synthesis of beliefs which could claim to be a higher form of truth because it was not exclusively Hindu or Muslim and could be acceptable to both. But this is a form of rationalisation which, however it may support the ideal of Hindu-Muslim spiritual unity, does not reflect the truth. Theology always divides, genuine spiritual experience always unites; Guru Nanak's spiritual experience was a unifying force because it was genuine, it does not claim to be genuine because it was a unifying force. We must not get involved in Arabic and Sanskrit, in history and philosophy, because Guru Nanak used Hari, Murari and Rahim and Sat Kartar as names of God. They are only aspects of a spiritual experience which took him from Attributes to the Essence. We cannot escape the confusion created by language; but we must do all we can to avoid a too straightforward identification of words and names with an experience which is, by its very nature, incommunicable.

Guru Nanak's insistence that none should be associated with God and that He should not be represented by any physical symbol

is obviously logical and inevitable if we regard his revelation as original. He was the founder of a new faith, not a religious reformer. He was not a believer in an existing religion who quoted the scriptures to justify emphasis on some values as against others; he was his own authority for saying what he did. There was no reason why he should accommodate or placate those who believed in the religion within whose fold he was born, or those of other religions who heard him preach. There was no reason why he should appeal to history and show that there were others who believed as he did. He was not supporting Muslim beliefs in attacking idolatry. It must have been obvious to him that the harsh practice of breaking idols and temples had made some Muslim rulers very unpopular, and Muslim rulers still had the opportunity of continuing this practice, which his own tolerant nature would not have allowed him to endorse.

The equality of all men before God appears at first sight to be a clearer case of borrowing from Islam than even the idea of one God, or to be a continuation of the attack on the caste system which was one of the facets of the bhakti movement. As regards the first possibility, Islam no doubt ordains an egalitarian society. But there was nothing egalitarian about Muslim society in India. Divisions on the basis of race and descent were recognised, in particular the difference between the Central Asian Turks and Tajiks, the Pathans and Indian Muslims. The Saiyyads were honoured above all others, whether they deserved it or not Differences of rank could be ignored only at great risk. The democratic Muslim salutation 'As Salaam-o-Alaikum' was for equals in status only. It was not used in the court; and elsewhere, if there was a too pronounced difference of rank or status, it would have to be combined with a bowing and placing of the hand on the head which would neutralise its egalitarian quality. The Mehdavis, who insisted on practising equality because it was enjoined in the Qur'an offended kings and courtiers and were bitterly persecuted for this among other reasons The equality advocated by the bhaktas was more spiritual than social; it depended for its acceptance on the

good sense of man, not on a clear and absolute command of God, the God of all mankind. The form in which Guru Nanak preached the equality of men could only be an 'occurrence of the heart', intimately connected with his belief in the one God.

Another point of resemblance between Islam and Guru Nanak's teaching is the concept of 'sahaj', of a desire for right living which is fostered within man with the help of tendencies inherent in his nature, as against asceticism and self-mortification practised because man's nature, with its multitudes of pestering desires, is held to be the greatest obstacle to his self-realisation In Islam the spiritual life is based on nature, and 'God does not demand of any (human) being more than he is able to bear.' Asceticism and self-mortification are forbidden. But here, as in the belief in one God, Islam affirms what is a universal tendency. The Buddha condemned both self-mortification and self-indulgence, and advised only such a tightening of the string of human nature as would enable it to produce the note proper to it, which would not happen if the string were stretched too tight or left too loose. The oracle of Delphi, whose guidance formed the basis of Greek religious life, advised the observance of balance. The teachings of Zoroaster and Confucius also commend normal living; their ideal is the householder who works, maintains a family and worships with a sincerity which suffuses his whole life. This simple ideal, however, does not impress, because there is nothing spectacular about it, and it has had, therefore, continually to contend against an exhibitionism which has been persistently but falsely considered the hall-mark of spirituality.

The ideal of the householder who worships God with sincerity and serves his fellow-men was obscured among Muslims by the Umayyad rulers and the Arab tribes who looked upon Islam as their patrimony and established their claim by the acquisition of political power. The sufis did their best to restore it to its just position. Shaikh Abu Bakr Shibli defined the sufi as one who regarded all mankind as relatives whom he had to serve and maintain, and even the preacher could not ignore the saying of the

Prophet that the man who earns his livelihood is a friend of God. Islam raised the status of the craftsman wherever it spread, but there is no doubt that lust for power and the inability of the pious and the truly religious to impose restraints on it upset the social standards and ideals of Islam. One could say that the injunction of Guru Nanak, 'Kirt karo, Nam japo, vand chako' was as relevant for the Muslims of his days as for the members of any other community. If we look for an exact parallel we find it not in the practice of the Muslims but in the sanctification of man's worldly vocation by Martin Luther (1483-1546), a contemporary of Guru Nanak's in far-away Germany.

Another point of resemblance is between the sufi concept of the shaikh and Guru Nanak's concept of the Guru. Here we are confronted with a complex pattern of parallel spiritual movements and questions arise that need elaborate discussion. And perhaps the first question would be to determine what Guru Nanak meant by the term 'Guru', when he himself had no spiritual instructor or guide. Did he mean God, as the eternal source of guidance and light, or an idealised human guide, whoever he might be ? This is a question for Sikh theologians and philosophers to settle, or decide not to settle.

Guru Nanak's organisation of community living was not basically different from the khanqahs of some sufi orders. But here again we have an idea that is logical in itself and almost universal. Men who share a belief and a way of life inevitably devise ways and means of community living, and the vihara, the ashram, the monastery and the khanqah represent the similarities as well as the characteristic differences of the ideal of community living.

It may appear strange that a Muslim should argue against the view that Guru Nanak was influenced by Islam. But the belief that 'Din', the true religion, has been revealed to all men is one of the basic doctrines of Islam, and this belief is confirmed, not weakened by the assertion that Guru Nanak's teachings present an independent, original spiritual experience. The Sikh is not obliged to the Muslim or the Muslim to the Sikh, and their faith in their

own religions should be all the stronger because of any confirmation of the one by the other. If they walk steadfastly on what is their true path they will discover that their paths and their goal are the same. That discovery will itself be a spiritual experience, an 'occurrence of the heart', a fulfilment of what God, in a story related by Maulana Jalaluddin Rumi, said to Moses: 'You have been sent to unite, not to divide'.

REFERENCE

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GANDHI AND THE MUSLIM MASSES

ONE OF THE saddest topics of conversation now among those who knew Mahatma Gandhi personally or participated actively in any of the movements led by him is the manner in which Indian sentiment and government policy have drifted away from what were considered Mahatma Gandhi's principles. There is no positive rejection of these principles in favour of others ; there is no desire to understand them. They seem to be things written with smoke on the sky which people observe and read and pass on. Is this because the Indian people have the habit of forgetting their benefactors, or is it because this particular benefactor upheld principles that are no more in tune with the times ?

The Hindu mind is generally impressed by a life of simplicity and self-denial. Not to desire and not to possess, to live unharassed by fulfilled and unfulfilled pleasures is for the Hindu in theory always and in itself the best of condition ; but in fact the Hindu is quite like other human beings, with an uncontrolled multitude of desires and hopes. Theory and fact have both had their place in Hindu life throughout the ages and have never been reconciled, though the Hindu has a logical mind which tries to link up everything with everything else—human life with the movements of the stars, or with the events of previous lives to explain the whole as well as the details of all that happens to him and to his world. In Mahatma Gandhi's life practice was identical with principle, but the principle, the moral and intellectual predisposition was traditional and Hindu. The admiration Hindus felt for him because of his abstinence, his achievement of mastery over the

flesh followed the traditional pattern ; except in a few cases there was no urge to identify practice with principle, to be like the Mahatma because of admiration for him and his way of life. Now that the Mahatma is no longer there, the Hindu lives like other normal human beings, and admiration for the Mahatma has to be pulled out of the depths of the subconscious.

On the Muslim simplicity makes no impression, and abstinence or self-denial he regards as a form of ingratitude to God unless there are obvious and compelling reasons for it. The Muslims did not like Mahatma Gandhi's way of life, and his dress and diet seemed to them idiosyncrasies inappropriate in a leader of men. Mahatma Gandhi's tolerance of other ways than his own did not affect the Muslim's attitude, because he had no doubt that his own way was the better way. The Hindu masses felt that they must do what was expected of them by paying homage to the traditional qualities of the saint in Mahatma Gandhi, and this homage was paid so constantly by such large numbers that the Muslim could easily convince himself that he would always have to remain at a distance, because he could not pay the same kind of homage.

I went to the Sabarmati Ashram at Ahmedabad in June 1926, as one of a party of four headed by Dr. Zakir Husain I was deeply impressed by Mahatma Gandhi himself, but felt completely out of place in the Ashram. There was an atmosphere of deliberately cultivated poverty, an almost oppressive consensus on doing without everything that was not essential for life and health —no smoking, no tea, no tasty food, no colourful dress. Mahatma Gandhi and the children laughed, but no one else. The only person who was officially permitted to drink tea was Imam Sahib, who had come with Mahatma Gandhi from South Africa. We were sent to his hut in the afternoon and took tea there. But when I asked his permission to smoke, he made a wry face and said, 'Smoke if you cannot do without it'. I put away my cigarette, feeling ashamed at my weakness. But I could not forget that I shared this weakness with a large part of the civilised world, with people who enjoyed themselves and yet had accomplished great

things, and whose normal life gave ample evidence of creative and useful activity. Was that a sign of weakness, a moral fault ? Was the Sabarmati Ashram a pointer to the path which the rest of the world must follow if it was to save itself from destruction or moral collapse ? These questions arose in my mind and I could not find answers favourable to the Sabarmati Ashram.

Mahatma Gandhi had two standards, one for himself and for those who pledged themselves to the 'ashram' way of life and to participation in all that was done to realise 'truth and non-violence', and another standard for those who acknowledged his leadership in the struggle for Indian freedom, who were willing to spin, to wear hand-spun, hand-woven cloth, to profess and practise non-violence but wished otherwise to live as they were used to. He was relentless with himself and with the followers of the first kind, the 'disciples'. One can only guess at the inner history of the first Ashram at Sabarmati and the second at Sevagram, near Wardha, but Mahatma Gandhi was not given to living on illusions and he could not have been satisfied with his experiments in monastic living. Why, then, his persistence in regarding it as the higher way of life ?

One could explain away Mahatma Gandhi's dressing as he did by saying that a genuine leader of the Indian people would have to dress like the mass of the people, who were too poor to wear anything more than a loincloth. His diet could not be explained in the same way, because the poor man's diet is dry bread or cooked or uncooked cereals, not fruit and milk Mahatma Gandhi's belief in the efficacy of spinning could be justified on economic grounds, but these were not the only grounds for his belief. He was beyond doubt sincere. He deduced all the details from first principles, and he was as firm in his belief in the correctness of his deductions as he was in the fundamental principles themselves. We cannot take his belief and practice into parts, and decide for ourselves which were meant for his own time and circumstances, and which for all time. As a Muslim and a student of Indian history I have come to regard every aspect of Mahatma

Gandhi's belief and practice as inevitable, as historically predetermined. For the same reasons I have to regard some of the externals he emphasised as tragic impediments to the full expression of the universal in his beliefs and his personality. The traditional Hindu concept of the good life was too deeply rooted in his nature for him to grow out of it

To understand the working of Mahatma Gandhi's mind, let us begin with the enunciation of the universal principle, now regarded as a platitude, that human life must be a reflection of the moral law. Those who accept this principle must assert and seek to realise in personal and social life values which would make the moral law effective and operative, in other words, establish truth, justice, beauty. From his boyhood Mahatma Gandhi had an awareness of right and wrong which developed into an unusual moral sensitivity. His intellect was subordinate to his moral instinct. He had been made to take a vow when leaving for England that he would not touch meat. He found it very difficult to keep his vow, but when he discovered a vegetarian restaurant and met vegetarians in London, the vow receded into the backgroud and he became intellectually converted to vegetarianism. He read about it, wrote about it. It seemed to activate his mind. Nothing else seems to have done so He took no interest in politics or in social problems during his stay of about three years in London. Scholarship, literature, art did not influence him at all, now or later. He was affected only by what explained, justified, confirmed what he believed and wanted to continue believing. It is remarkable how very limited his reading was. The Bible, the Qur'an, the Bhagvadgita, two works of Tolstoy, Ruskin's *Unto this Last*, about make up the total of what he read, and he read nothing presenting a different view from his own in life or religion. Morally he was capable of admitting his own mistakes, of judging himself from his opponent's point of view with an incredible frankness and openness of mind, but he seemed to have no inclination whatsoever towards the exercise of his critical faculty in the consideration of intellectual problems. Once the moral issue was clear, the only function his

intellect performed was to communicate to others what his moral sense dictated. It was a horse harnessed to a cart that had to use all its strength in pulling the cart in a particular direction. It could not browse or wander on its own, seeking lush pastures. It had to keep to the road, to see nothing but the road.

The energy released by this harnessing of the intellect to a moral purpose was tremendous. The young barrister who broke down while pleading a simple case in a small cause court in Bombay was within a few years organising resistance to racial laws in South Africa in a spectacular fashion, and facing men and situations with astonishing courage and resourcefulness. On his return to India, as he gradually came to the forefront, he adopted the methods of 'satyagraha' (firmness in truth) which he had evolved in South Africa. His advocacy of the peasants' cause in Champaran and Kheda, of the workmen's cause at Ahmedabad were successful exercises in satyagraha, and a preparation for the struggle known as the Khilafat and Non-cooperation movement. From 1919 onwards the Indian National Congress looked to him for guidance and inspiration, his personality became the symbol of India's moral and social awakening and the promise of national freedom. But in course of time a subtle change took place. The 'Salt Satyagraha' of 1930 was the result of a search for an issue on which to fight the British government and, as compared with the Non-cooperation movement, was very much the cause of a political party, even though the masses as a whole would have benefited from its success. So was the 'Quit India' movement of 1942 which, in addition, was inconsistent with the principle followed by Mahatma Gandhi in the Boer War and the First World War, that the British government's embarrassment and preoccupation with what seemed to it a life and death struggle should not be taken advantage of.

It is clear from these instances, historic in themselves, that Mahatma Gandhi's methods evoked sincere and widespread response where the injustice he sought to remove was obvious, and the more limited his objectives, the greater was his success. His

endeavour to give a moral character to the Indian people's struggle for freedom made his opponents—both Hindu and Muslim—suspicious where the issue were mainly or entirely political, such as the question of separate electorates or reservation of seats in legislative assemblies for Muslims or the demand for Pakistan. It was a hindrance to him personally also, because he could not think and act on the same level as his opponents ; he sought to apply moral principles where only such tactical moves as would put the opponent in the wrong or reduce the damage that could be done were called for. On the other hand, there is no doubt that Mahatma Gandhi's championship of the untouchables removed a cancer in the Hindu social system and gave the status of full citizenship to millions who had been regarded as sub-human for thousands of years. His 'constructive programme' was a very efficient means of integrating the urban and rural elements of the Indian population and of harnessing the enthusiasm of thousands of men and women. It also provided a direction—not followed after independence—for the planning of Indian economy. But here again, the identification of moral principle with economic policy proved a hindrance. The idea of full employment and of every individual being a productive unit are economic ideas, not to be mixed up with spiritual ideals. Spinning yarn and wearing hand-spun hand-woven cloth, if proposed as temporary measures, the encouragement of village industries, if not confused with opposition to industrialisation, might have stimulated inventiveness, promoted small scale industries and given a healthy direction to Indian economic development. Elevation of spinning to a form of worship, idealisation of a life where medicine and surgery could be dispensed with implied a commitment to particular views which could be shared by only a few, and these few would be under a psychological pressure to cultivate a pride that would provoke resistance if not ridicule.

And yet criticism such as this is no more than the ant of expediency biting the elephant of absolute sincerity. In particular, the Indian critic with an essentially European intellectual background is more anxious to show the sharpness of his teeth than the

breadth and comprehensiveness of his vision. Consider Mahatma Gandhi's insistence on simplicity in the context of a society where the lords and masters have practised senseless extravagance at the cost of the masses, or of a democratic society with a planned economy where the import of nylon yarn is more important than the import of books, and all cavilling at the ideal of simplicity looks short-sighted and foolish. Consider the traditional diet of the vegetarian Hindu, the frying, the over-cooking, the mad hunger for sweets, and it will be apparent that Mahatma Gandhi's advocacy of a simple diet of preferably raw vegetables has taught dietetic good sense to a far larger number of people than all the doctors put together.

The drive for development of village industries failed, the idea of education through work could not be realised not because the schemes were basically defective but because inventiveness and discernment in the one case and sincerity in the other were lacking. The 'ashram' way of life did not justify itself beyond producing a band of workers who were more devoted than wise, but Mahatma Gandhi succeeded in transforming himself and his capacities into the most perfect instruments for the achievement of the ends to which he had dedicated himself Satyagraha, as he understood and practised it, was always an effective means, but one person, however intense his belief, however great his power, cannot change ways of thought and action that have been customary for ages and have become second nature. He is entitled to our reverence and admiration not so much because of the measure of his success but because of the passion with which he tries

One of the cherished aims of Mahatma Gandhi was the attainment of Hindu-Muslim unity. The political aspect of this unity would have been an adjustment of rights and opportunities to the satisfaction of both parties. This was obviously of crucial importance. But no adjustment could be made unless both parties felt the compulsion, the absolute necessity of making it, and while the British ruled it was open to extremists and persons who could not repress the bargaining spirit to prevent an agreement being arrived

at. The Congress leadership gradually came to the conclusion that the third party, the British government, would have to be removed before Hindus and Muslims could be made to agree. The Muslims, however, felt, quite reasonably, that questions left over for settlement till after the British had left would be decided by a majority vote, and the spirit in which negotiations about rights and opportunities had so far been conducted did not justify any optimism about the majority opinion. The nationalist Muslims were willing to take the risk, and it was mainly because of their support that Mahatma Gandhi adopted the Congress point of view. Judging from what ultimately happened, he would have thrown his whole weight in the balance, which means he would have fasted to death, to ensure that the Muslims got not only a fair but a favourable deal. But what if he died before India became free ? What if the Hindus refused to listen to his advice and resisted the moral pressure he exercised ? The final result of the confrontation of Hindus and Muslims was the partition of India, to which the Mahatma was forced ultimately to agree by those closest to him, Maulana Azad alone excepted Here, if anywhere, Mahatma Gandhi failed Here, if anywhere, lies his claim to a more than human greatness

The whole political history of mankind can be resolved into a struggle between justice and self-interest. The Melian dialogue of Thucydides has been repeated constantly by tongues and hearts, Socrates has died many times. Mahatma Gandhi stood for justice against the self-interest of both Hindus and Muslims. In an atmosphere of suspicion it is impossible for anyone to say and do nothing that will cause misunderstanding. The Muslims were willing to do anything at his behest when he was leading the Khilafat movement. From 1923 onwards, when both the communities were busy staking their claims, Mahatma Gandhi was continuously accused of seeking to give a moral status to what were really the demands of the majority community. It was only when the killings started in 1946 that he stood forth as the only vocal and effective champion of human love and sympathy. His endea-

vour to bring Hindus and Muslims together as one people united in goodwill and trust is one of the epic struggles in history, where the tragedy of inevitable failure is more meaningful and inspiring than the satisfaction of accidental success, and where the martyr's death is the victory of his cause.

Historically, Mahatma Gandhi represents the utmost limits of Hinduism's expansion from within. His political and social activity was inspired by his interpretation of the moral and spiritual duties of a Hindu. His predecessors in spiritual leadership, Aurobindo Ghosh and Swami Vivekanand, spoke and wrote with far greater fervour and a more obvious dedication to the spiritual values of Hinduism. But their sphere of activity was intellectual, their spiritual fervour did not lead them into the social world, with its injustices and aberrations from the right path. They accepted the fundamental unity of religions, but the form of Hinduism which they represented was not free from what the pure theist would call animism and idol-worship.

Mahatma Gandhi treasured some myths because of the moral lessons to be derived from them, in essence he was a pure theist. He believed as a Hindu that all religions are true, but he went further and asked all believers to be true to their own religions. His acceptance of the Muslim was not based on expediency or humanism or any concept of natural justice. He believed that, as a Hindu, he was under a moral and spiritual obligation to give equal status to the Hindu and the Muslim, and the Jamia Millia Islamia of Delhi is one of the results of his endeavour to induce Muslims to make their lives and activities an embodiment of the ethical values of Islam. One wishes that Mahatma Gandhi had investigated more closely and from an objective intellectual standpoint the origin of his concept of Satyagraha ; he may have found that the Bhagvadgita and the Qur'an were saying the same thing. His view may not have been accepted by the Muslims or the Hindus, but he would have stimulated the urge for a general revaluation of values and promoted the unity for which he was willing and, in fact, surrendered his life

THE INDIAN MUSLIMS AFTER INDEPENDENCE

AT A PARTY given during the U N. General Assembly Session in 1949 I had the pleasure of being placed next to the Turkish representative. He looked at my name card, saw that I was a Muslim and at once asked, 'Are there still any Muslims in India ?' The impression then created does not yet seem to have been removed and it is believed that the sub-continent had been divided between Muslims and Hindus, with all Muslims on the one side and all Hindus on the other. This belief is completely wrong. There are not only Muslims in India, but over 40 million of them and their number is increasing They are found in all walks of life, in the Government, in the teaching profession, in other liberal professions, in trade and industry and in the rural areas. They are not only there but believe they ought to be there by right of being children of the soil and free citizens of a free country.

The reasons why India was partitioned is a painful subject not only for the Hindus, but for a vast number of Muslims, both in India and Pakistan. I do not propose to discuss here the reasons for the partition. But two facts, it is necessary to remember, because of their consequences. The party which demanded the creation of Pakistan, 'a separate homeland for the Indian Muslims', was the Muslim League. In the election held early in 1946, which proved decisive, it secured 425 out of 492 seats reserved for Muslims in the Central and the different Provincial Legislatures. It could be said, therefore, that Indian Muslims were overwhelmingly in favour of Pakistan. But the franchise was limited to the propertied classes,

and those who voted for the League and its policies did not know for what they were voting, because the League deliberately avoided defining what was meant by the creation of Pakistan. It insisted that the right to 'a separate homeland for the Muslims', to be called Pakistan, should be conceded first. The voting for Pakistan was thus a leap in the dark and can hardly be regarded as a considered move.

The other fact that needs to be remembered is that there was an uprooting of the populations in three Muslim majority and one Muslim minority province Most of the Hindus in Sind, all the Hindus in the North West Frontier Province and West Punjab were forced to migrate to India and the Muslims in East Punjab to migrate to Pakistan. An incredible amount of rioting and bloodshed accompanied this partition and migration, and the situation created by this has to be borne in mind when considering the position of the Indian Muslims who remained in India after partition.

We still wonder what would have happened to these Indian Muslims but for Mahatma Gandhi. He was in Delhi when the riots took place, when the refugees from Pakistan streamed into the city carrying with them stories of the atrocities committed against them. Mahatma Gandhi insisted that the Muslims who wished to remain in India should be provided complete security and full citizenship rights. He went on a fast which he declared would end only with his life unless all his demands in regard to the safety of the Muslims were accepted and the necessary action taken. While his influence was enough to calm down feelings of most Hindus, and it was possible to help a large number of uprooted Muslims to settle down, there were some who regarded him as a traitor to the Hindus and it was at the hands of one such person that Mahatma Gandhi lost his life It is significant in this connection that no outstanding persons or groups in Pakistan made any effective attempt to ensure the security of the Hindus or to enable those who did not wish to migrate to stay on. If they had done so, the lot of the Muslims, immediately after partition would have been much easier. The decision in regard to exchange of populations applied

only to Eastern and Western Punjab. A large proportion of the Hindus in the North West Frontier Province and in Sind would have stayed on if they could. On the other hand, there would have been much less of immigration of the Hindus of East Pakistan into West Bengal and anti-Muslim sentiment in eastern and northern India would not have been constantly revived.

This is how the history of the Muslims in free India begins. What has happened since ?

As a preface to everything else, it has to be stated that the meaning of the formation of two independent states was not realised by Muslims on either side of the frontier. They did not understand why there should be restrictions on travel, why a person should not be able to hold property in both countries, why non-Muslims in India should have any objection to Muslims maintaining relationships as before with the members of their families who had migrated, in fact, why the establishment of Pakistan should be resented in any way by non-Muslims in India. On the other side, while the vast majority of the non-Muslims were willing and able to suppress their resentment, there were also elements among them that were actively hostile, and to them it seemed that the Congress Government, and above all, its leader, Jawaharlal Nehru, was objectionably pro-Muslim.

The security of Muslims in India has been endangered by these actively hostile elements, and by the attitude of the government of East Pakistan towards its Hindu citizens. The maintenance of law and order is the responsibility of the State Governments, which have shown on occasions that they were not sufficiently alert. It has appeared, also, that attacks on Muslim populations, wherever they occurred, were planned and might have been prevented if prompt action had been taken. But those who planned the attacks always prepared the ground by spreading rumours that created a strong sentiment against the Muslims, and made the neutral non-Muslims indifferent to the fate of the Muslims attacked. It must be remembered, however, that these attacks have always been more or less local, and while at first they created such panic that some

Muslims of the affected areas migrated to Pakistan, this tendency has gradually weakened, and Muslims have stuck to their place in spite of riots and attacks. From the time immediately following the partition, the Muslims have not felt and have not been generally insecure. They have had full faith in the Central Government, and the Central Government has done all in its power to ensure their security. The war of September in 1965 has strengthened the position of the Muslims by showing that they are as patriotic Indians as the non-Muslims, and we may say that the problem of the security of the Indian Muslims has been solved. With the war has also come a full realisation of the fact that India and Pakistan are two different states, and not merely one country divided into two because of a quarrel that should be forgotten.

The problem of employment is closely linked with the problem of security, but is much more complicated.

The factor that has caused the greatest complication is the habit inculcated in Indian Muslims by the British government in its own interest of expecting special consideration from the government in the matter of service. After the establishment of the Congress in 1885 and the growth of its influence, British administrators began to patronise the Muslims of the upper classes and tried to wean them away from the national movement with offers of reservation of seats in municipal and legislative assemblies, separate electorates and employment under the government. The tendency to complain that the Muslims had got less than their due was encouraged and, what was much more dangerous, the Muslims were made to believe that if it came to competition, they would have no chances against the Hindus. All the concessions made for the Muslims as a minority and a supposedly backward community continued till 1947. Thereafter, special consideration was shown only to the really backward communities, listed as Scheduled Castes, and the Muslims were left to get what they could on merit. This made the Muslims of the upper classes feel that they had been thrown to the wolves of unemployment and starvation.

A second factor was the land reform policy of the Congress

Government, of taking land away from the landlords and giving it to the peasants with full proprietary rights. The indication that these reforms would be carried out was given in 1937, when the Congress first came to power in a majority of the Indian provinces. The landlords were mainly Hindus, but there was a large number of Muslims also who depended, as landlords, on the rents they received from the tenants. The far-sighted among the landlords either disposed of their land or established large farms and gardens, and thus obtained exemption from the application of the law when it was enforced. But most of the Muslim landlords, specially the smaller ones, did nothing to save themselves. A large number of lawyers also, whose practice depended on litigation among the landlords, lost their main source of income.

The demand for Pakistan was made principally by the upper class Muslims. The vast majority of Muslim officers in the government who were given the choice of serving in India or Pakistan chose to go to Pakistan A large number of businessmen also transferred their business to Pakistan. Those of the upper classes who did not migrate immediately after partition found an easy way out by migrating to Pakistan later on in search of employment. In some services this caused a marked reduction in the number of Muslim applicants. For quite a number of years very few eligible Muslims appeared for competitions or selections for the administrative services, the army, navy and air force, and in the engineering services, because it was much simpler to migrate. This was a third factor complicating the problem of employment. But it is also true that in the first years after partition quite a number of Muslims, specially in the police service, were thrown out to restore the balance in favour of the majority community, which had not been given its due share by the British administrators in order to provide jobs for Muslims.

During the last ten years, the situation has gradually changed. The number of Muslims recruited to the higher-grades of the administrative services is still negligible, because that class from which recruitment was made has mostly migrated to Pakistan.

The number of Muslims in the armed forces and the police is slowly increasing. Overseers and engineers who formerly migrated are now looking for jobs and finding them in India. It is difficult to give any statistics, because recruitment is not on a communal basis, but even a person in my position, who is concerned in a minor way with selection for posts of different kinds or to whom people looking for employment come with requests for recommendation, does not meet or hear of many competent young men who are unemployed. International business houses and industrial concerns which formerly followed a policy of employing Muslims in Pakistan and non-Muslims in India are now throwing open their doors to Muslims in India. Old Muslim business houses in the main trading and industrial centres are now in much better position, and more and more enterprising Muslims are building up businesses of their own

Employment is not an Indian Muslim problem only. It is an acute problem for all Indians because of the limited opportunities and the rapidly increasing population. It is inevitable that there should be great pressure on the sources of employment that exist and, therefore, suspicions of discrimination. What can be said with assurance, however, is that Indian Muslims are not its only victims. Caste prejudices, linguistic and regional prejudices provide ample reasons for practising discrimination, and perhaps Muslims do not suffer more than others because of it. Discriminanation is least in evidence in employment under the central government; in the states its pattern varies

One important point to be remembered in this connection is that independence has brought about a social revolution, and sections of the population that were denied opportunities in the past are now coming up and demanding their rightful share. In Muslim society, only people belonging to the upper classes were regarded as deserving of interest and consideration. In the whole movement for education among Muslims during British rule there is hardly any reference to the needs of the poorer classes. It was considered improper, even ridiculous for them to demand equality

of opportunity in education, and society looked askance at those who did get education. Now the oppressive weight of the upper classes has been removed, and our democratic government is really sincere in providing opportunities of education to the largest possible number of its citizens At the present time, while the remnants of the old upper class may be complaining, the hitherto suppressed classes are coming up, in education and in economic life. Unless the Muslim interest is identified with the welfare and prosperity of the upper class Muslims, an investigation would perhaps reveal that the Muslims as a whole are better off than they were before.

How do the Indian Muslims stand in the matter of education?

It is the function of the state to provide opportunities and the state is performing this function to the best of its ability. The Indian Muslims on their side are taking advantage of the opportunities offered. There is a definite desire on the part of the state to encourage Islamic Studies, and while some of the Universities have departments of Islamic Studies, almost all have departments for Arabic, Persian and Urdu. On the other hand, institutions like the Theological Seminary at Deoband, are flourishing They are not supported by the state, but they have more funds and more students than they had before A movement for organisation of religious education at the elementary level was started about ten years ago and is now showing encouraging results Generally speaking, the Indian Muslims have not only taken what was given to them. They have actively participated in the framing of educational policy, for themselves and for the people as a whole

The third major problem of the Indian Muslims is that of political and cultural survival.

The ideology of the Muslim League and the demand of a separate homeland for the Muslims was based on the assumption that the whole Muslim community possesses a common political and economic interest. But even a superficial consideration of the distribution of the Muslim community in the country and the many economic classes of which it is constituted would at once

disprove this theory. The Muslim landlord and the Muslim agriculturist could not possibly have the same economic interest, nor the Muslims in the free professions the same interest as the craftsmen. But the possibility of uniting the Muslims on the basis of a common allegiance required the rejection of all, and specially of political relationships with non-Muslims has been exploited to the full by the Muslim League because the Muslims were a separate electoral body, and the franchise, as I have already stated, was limited. But now there are no separate constituencies for the Muslims or any other community, and the question arises as to what the Indian Muslims should do to ensure their political survival.

There is still a Muslim League party in a southern state, but anywhere else in India a purely Muslim political party would not be able to achieve anything and would only antagonise the other communities. But is there any risk, and fear of loss in the Indian Muslims not being organised as a separate political party? I do not see any. In a democracy, where government has to be the government of the majority, a small party working for its own interests can serve no useful purpose, when these interests themselves are likely to be inconsistent with each other, because the party has a religious and not an economic or political basis. On the other hand, if we are agreed that democracy is an Islamic principle, that the organisation and promotion of social welfare is an Islamic duty, the Indian Muslims can serve Islam and themselves best by associating themselves with persons and parties who aim at making democracy as real as possible and at achieving the maximum of social justice and social welfare through the legislative and administrative action of the state. There has been this kind of association. Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, who died in 1956, is still remembered as one of the ablest administrators the Indian Government had, a man of swift decisions whose trust in his subordinates made it a stimulating experience to serve under him. His generosity was limitless, and his regard for fair dealing so great that his bitterest political opponents came to him for justice. He

came from a family of landlords, but it was he who took the lead in the abolition of landlordism. Maulana Azad, free India's first education minister, was another outstanding figure, a man of great learning and courage, who often stood for justice against immediate political interest, and has left a deep impression on the Indian people. It is impossible to believe that Muslims would sacrifice their own interests if they cooperated with and gave the lead to parties working genuinely for the highest human interests.

Muslim culture would also derive enormous benefit if the Indian Muslims worked for common ideals in cooperation with the other communities. There has, no doubt, been an element of cultural self-assertion in Hindu nationalism There was a tendency to look at the remote past and incorporate its qualities in the image of new India, and this revivalism was directed more against the Muslims than against the British, because the Muslims had been culturally dominant for a far longer period. The form of revivalism that annoyed the Muslims most was the rejection of the Urdu language and the propagation of Hindi. Urdu had been built up as a literary and conversational language by the joint efforts of both Hindus and Muslims; its rejection in favour of Hindi made it seem that the whole contribution of Muslims to Indian culture was being rejected, and the culture of free India would be exclusively Hindu. There is no point in discussing and passing judgement here upon a whole historical process. The present-day reality is that the movement of revivalism among the Hindus has failed to lead anywhere. Hindi as defined in the Constitution would have been acceptable as a national language almost without question, but the revivalist character given to it by certain dogmatic and reactionary advocates has produced a sharp reaction. On the other hand, there is no doubt that in certain vital areas, such as the state of Uttar Pradesh, where Muslims form a substantial minority and in Delhi, administrative action has gone against professed policy and the teaching of Urdu in schools has been almost entirely stopped. But in some other states of India, Urdu is getting the official recognition and support to which it is entitled and there is

ample evidence now of a reaction in favour of Urdu, which will gather force because of the attractive qualities of the language itself. Urdu is, in fact, the most widely spoken language in northern India and is recognised as the language of polite conversation. Even those who cannot themselves speak it well enjoy hearing it spoken and Urdu poetry has a fascination that none can resist. In Mushairas, or assemblies where poets recite their verses the crowd is always larger than can be accommodated, and there are many in the crowd who have only a vague understanding of what the poets say. But their enjoyment is real, for Urdu poetry has become symbolic of the free personality, of intensity of feeling and of a moving beauty of expression. It has given a language to love, which is the most human and most creative of emotions; it has given form and meaning to those situations in which the passion for life discovers itself. Since Urdu poetry is a projection of Muslim culture, those who appreciate its values cannot but pay homage to Muslim culture, and realise its significance for the refinement of their own life. More and more people are beginning to understand that unless Indians as a whole are to adopt a cheap imitation of European and American culture, there is no alternative to a revival of the culture created by themselves during the medieval and early modern period, a culture that is distinctively their own. The cultural survival of the Indian Muslims is thus being promoted by the movement of events.

INDEX

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